

*The clearest and surest Marks of our being so led
by the SPIRIT of GOD, as to demonstrate
that we are the Children of GOD.*

SET FORTH
IN

Several *Discourses*

FROM

Romans VIII. XIV.

Part of which was delivered

AT THE

Thursday-Lecture

in *Boston,*

January 13. 1742, 3.

By *Nathanael Appleton, M. A.*

Pastor of the first Church in *Cambridge.*

Eph. 4. 4. There is one Body, and ONE SPIRIT.

*1 John 3. 24. --- And hereby we know that he
abideth in us, BY THE SPIRIT which he
hath given us.*

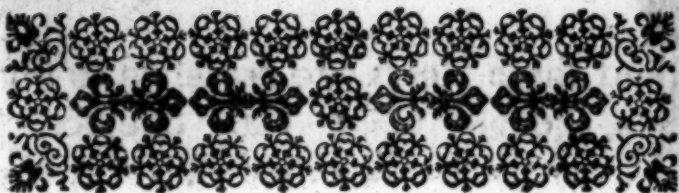
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THE
PREFACE.



AFTER I had delivered some Part of the following *Discourses*, at the publick Lecture in BOSTON ; I was repeatedly desired to give a Copy of the several Sermons which
† I

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I had some Years ago preached to my own People upon this Subject. || And when I called to Mind the general Acceptance they met with, when preached at Home ; as well as the Approbation that Part of them met with, which was delivered Abroad, I yielded to the Request.

But the grand Inducement was this, that I apprehended it to be a very useful Subject in itself, and a very seasonable one for the present Day.

For when there are so many Disputes among Christians ; what will serve better to compose, and calm their Spirits towards each other, than to be sensible of this, that thro' the Weakness, Ignorance, and remaining Corruption

Corruption in Christians, it may so happen, that they may widely differ in some Points from each other; and yet be the true Children of God? And what is there that has such a happy Tendency to restore, and preserve Charity, Peace, and Union one with another; as a full Perswasion that some who have different Sentiments from us, may, in the general, be under the Influence of the same gracious Spirit with us, Friends of CHRIST, united to him by Faith as well as *we*, as much concerned for the Honour and Interest of CHRIST as *we*, and as much concerned to get to Heaven as *we*, and may have as sure a Title to that glorious Inheritance as *we*?

Moreover, as there are so many Disputes about the true Marks and Signs of Adoption, and as to the Persons that may be reckoned the dear Children

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Children of GOD; it cannot be unreasonable, when the glorious Privileges of GOD's Children, and the great Duty of seeking the clearest Evidences of being of that happy Number, are set forth; at the same Time to point out the many false and uncertain Marks that People are apt to fix upon, and rest satisfied with, that such self-flattering and self-deceiving Souls, may be shaken off from their false Foundations, and build their Hopes upon no other than what is laid in CHRIST, and in his Gospel.

And although all who call themselves the Children of GOD, allow that the *being led and governed by the SPIRIT of GOD*, is the surest Mark of Adoption; yet even here Christians very often differ, and are in Danger of making Mistakes; making

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king some Things to be the Operation of GOD'S SPIRIT, that are not; or denying some Things to be the Work of the SPIRIT of GOD, which do really come from him.

Accordingly, several of the ensuing Discourses are taken up in setting this Matter in the truest and clearest Light I was capable of; giving the Scripture, and only the Scripture Marks and Signs of being led by the SPIRIT of GOD. And by these Rules I desire every Reader would carefully examine himself, and not rest satisfied in any Tokens of Regeneration and Adoption, short hereof.

In reading this little Book, you will meet with very close Questions; I desire you would read them distinctly, and after a serious Pause upon

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on them, put them very closely to your selves, and let Conscience speak the Truth.

I entreat Christians of every Party, who look over these Discourses, to do it with Candour, and let the unworthy Author have an Interest in your Prayers.

And may the blessed SPIRIT, who (I hope) assisted me in composing, assist you in reading, and so accompany these Things into your Hearts, as that you may know by happy Experience, what it is to be under his blessed and gracious Influences. And may that SPIRIT of GOD, *who searcheth all Things, even the deep Things of GOD*, assist you in the Trial of your selves by his own Rules, and may he shine upon his own Work wherever it is wrought, and carry it
on

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on in your Souls, from one Degree to another, 'till it shall be perfected in Glory.

N. *Appleton.*



ERRATA.

Page 9. last Line but one, for *even*, read *wherein*.
 p. 11. l. 12. f. *the*, r. *their*. p. 31. l. 2.
 dele *that they are*, r. *and*. l. 3. add *of the same*
divine Spirit. p. 34. l. 12, 13. f. *those*, r. *these*.
 p. 39. l. 8. f. *Effects* r. *Estates*. p. 40. l. 18. f. *is* r.
as. p. 44. 2d Line from the Bottom, f. *thus*
 r. *this*. p. 64. l. 8. f. *this* r. *the*. l. 22. f. *Titles*
 r. *Tokens*. p. 69. l. 8. f. *that* r. *than*. p. 83.
 l. 1. f. *go* r. *goes*. l. 6. from the Bottom f.
Effects r. *Estates*. p. 86. l. 8. f. *they* r. *it*. p.
 89. l. 19. f. *when* r. *whom*. p. 100. l. 9. f.
dictates r. *deters*. l. 15. f. *they* r. *that*. p. 108.
 l. 12. f. *distant* r. *different*. p. 123. l. 9. f. *Nature*
 r. *native*. p. 133. l. 9. dele *yet*. p. 139.
 l. 10. add *will*. p. 141. l. 15. f. *your* r. *their*.
 p. 156. l. 3. from the Bottom, f. *secretly* r. *sensibly*.
 p. 176. l. 17. f. *thoughtful* r. *thankful*.
 l. 5. from the Bottom f. *are* r. *is*. p. 177. l. 5.
 f. *them* r. *they*. 6 AP 64

There are several lesser Errors and false Pointings, which are left for the Reader to Correct.

Every Child of G O D,
led by one SPIRIT.

ROM. viii. 14.

*For as many as are led by the
Spirit of God, they are the
Sons of God.*



THE whole World of Mankind is
divided into two Sorts, *Saints*
and *Sinners*; the Children of
God, and the Children of the
wicked One. And *that* which
distinguishes Men, and truly fixes
one or the other of these Characters upon them,
is the *Spirit within*, which leads and governs
them.

2 Every Child of God,

them. For every Man is a Child of God, or a Child of the Devil, according to the Spirit he is govern'd by. They who are under the tyrannical Power of carnal, worldly, and wicked Principles are of their Father the Devil; whilst such as are governed by a divine and gracious Principle are the Children of God. My Text leads to consider only this latter Sort of Persons. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.* As many, how many soever, of what Nation or People, of what Station, and Condition of Life soever, and what different Perswasion soever as to some particular Points of Christianity, and whatever Apprehension others may have of them, or they may have of others; yet if they are led by the Spirit of God, that is, if they are under the gracious Guidance and Government of the blessed Spirit, they are the Children of God.

And as so many who are thus led and govern'd are the Children of God, so there are no more to be reckoned in that happy Number. For let Men be never so thoro' in their Knowledge, never so orthodox in their Principles, let them make never so high a Profession, and appear never so zealous about religious Matters, let their Character run never so high among Men, even as the most eminent Saints; yet if they be not led, if they be not invivified and influenced by the Spirit of God, he will not own them for his Sons, or his Daughters. For

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if any Man have not *the Spirit* of Christ, he is none of *his*, as in the 9th Verse of the Context.

And now without any further Opening the Words, or taking up your Time, in shewing how the Words stand related to the preceeding or following Part of the Chapter, which might afford many profitable Thoughts to us, I shall proceed immediately to consider the doctrinal Truth which lyes very obvious in the Words, viz.

DOCTRINE.

The surest and clearest Mark of our being the Children of God, is our being led and govern'd by the Spirit of God.

Here are two Propositions that lye very fairly to be spoken to, viz.

I. Prop. *Every Child of God is led, and govern'd by one and the SAME SPIRIT; even the Spirit of God.*

II. Prop. *The surest and clearest Mark of our being the Children of God, is our being led and govern'd by HIS SPIRIT.*

I. Prop. *Every Child of God is led and govern'd by one and the SAME SPIRIT; even the Spirit of God.*

The same divine Spirit, the same gracious and heavenly Principle animates and actuates every Saint. For as all those who are led by the Spirit of God are his Children ; so all his Children are led by his Spirit. There is not so much as one real Saint upon Earth, but what is under the gracious and powerful Influence of the divine Spirit, as the prevailing governing Principle in the Soul. Every Saint and true Believer is united to God and Christ by the holy Spirit. They dwell in him, and he in them *by the holy Spirit, that is given to them* *. *There is one Body, and there is one Spirit* †. As one Soul or Spirit animates the humane Body, even all the Organs and Members of it, so the Church, that is, the living Members thereof, which are the Body of Christ, are animated and govern'd by one Spirit. They are all *born* of the same *Spirit*, and so have the same divine Life breathed into them. They have thro' Christ access *by one Spirit* unto the Father †. And every true Believer is united one to another by the same Spirit that dwells in them.

As the Son of God, the Seed of the Woman, was promised immediately after the Fall, and in the Fulness of Time was sent into the World, to make Attonement for Sin, and to make Way for God to pardon and save all that believe in

* 1 John 4. 13. † Eph. 4. 4. † Eph. 2. 18.

him : So the Spirit of God was sent into the World to begin and carry on the Work of divine Grace in Men's Soul's. And this Spirit has been in the World operating upon, and leading and governing the Saints in all Ages from the Beginning of the World unto this Day.

Indeed we read in our Saviour's Time (which was near four thousand Years after the Fall of Adam) *that the Holy Ghost was not YET given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified **. And he tells his Disciples that it was expedient for them, that he should go away, for if he did not depart, *the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, would not come unto them, but if he departed he would send him unto them †*. Which Expressions may at first Glance look as if the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, had not been in the World, nor operating upon the Hearts of Men, 'till *that Time*.

But now *that Coming of the Holy Ghost* which Christ foretells and promises, is not to be understood as if the Spirit of God had never been at all manifested before that Time ; but it doubtless intends the more glorious Manifestation of him, in those extraordinary and *miraculous Gifts* which were bestowed upon the Apostles, and other Disciples, after Christ's Ascension : And also the extraordinary *gracious*

* John 7. 39. † John 16. 7.

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Influences which he had on the Hearts of Multitudes at that Time.

But it is by no means to be understood as if the Spirit of God had not been operating upon the Hearts of Men before that Time. For it is certain that the Spirit of God had been communicating both Gifts and Graces, thro' all the Ages of the Church.

All the Prophets of Old were inspired with the Gift of Prophecy, from *the same Spirit*; for it was when the Spirit of the Lord was upon them, that they prophesied. *For the Prophecy came not in old Time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* *.

Moreover, the *same divine Spirit* which has wrought powerfully and effectually upon true Believers since the Coming of Christ, wrought in and upon every gracious Saint from the Beginning of the World to *that Time*. *The same Spirit* that opened the Heart of *Lydia* to receive the Word, opened the Eyes of the Psalmist to behold the wondrous Things out of God's Law. The *Holy Spirit* which the Psalmist prays might not be *taken* from him, and the *free Spirit* which he prays God to *uphold him with* †, was the *same Spirit* who has been with, and has upheld every Christian in the Ways of God, and by whose mighty Power they have been pre-

* 2 Pet. i. 21. † Psal. 51. 11, 12.

served thro' Faith unto Salvation. In short, there have been Strivings of the Spirit of God from the Beginning : And every one that has been bro't into a State of Grace, and so made a Child of God, from *Adam* to this Day, it has been by the gracious and powerful Operations of *this* Spirit.

And as there is that *Unity of the Spirit* by which every real Member of Christ is *united* to him and to one another ; so there is a great *Uniformity* in the Operations of this blessed Spirit, upon the Soul of every Saint ; that is to say, he in the General forms the same Temper and Disposition in them ; puts them under the Influence of the same good Principle, and leads them to the same gracious Views and Designs in their Actions, so that it may be said that in the General there is the same gracious Temper and Principle, the same gracious Views and Designs in every Child of God. And therefore whatever Difference there may be in their Sentiments upon some religious Points, and how hardly soever they may judge and treat one another ; yet I say, that if they are the Children of God they are in the General under the governing Influence of the same blessed Spirit ; and it may be said of all of them, that a Principle of Grace wrought by the same Spirit, is the prevailing Principle in their Souls.

And because this is a very important Truth ; and yet perhaps not so much thought upon as it

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it should be, and the due Consideration of which would serve very much to direct Christians how to conduct themselves one towards another, I will therefore spend a few Minutes in illustrating and confirming this Point, and then proceed to the other Proposition which I have my Eye mainly upon.

Here then let me briefly say,

1. *The Children of God often differ from one another in many Points, and sometimes carry these Differences to a very great Length.*

2. *Notwithstanding this, they are really under the governing Influence of the same divine Spirit, in the General.*

3. *I will then mention some uniform Operations of the Spirit upon their Souls and shew wherein they agree.*

1. *The Children of God often differ from one another in many Points, and sometimes carry their Differences to a very great Length.*

For altho' God has favoured his Church with as clear and as full a Revelation as is needful to instruct us in every Thing necessary to be known or done; yet as to many other Things the Revelation is not so particular, but it leaves Room and gives Occasion for a great Variety of Opinions among the Disciples of Christ: Which is too evident to need a Proof, and the Instances too many to pretend to mention them. The many Disputes that have been among Christians about

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about doctrinal, yea, and practical Points from the Apostles Times to this Day, are a Demonstration hereof.

And these Differences in Opinion and in Practice, have arisen very much from the different Education, and from the different Advantages Men have had for gaining Light and Knowledge ; yea, and from the different Powers and Capacities of Men for seeing into Things, and judging upon them, some having a much greater Reach and Extent of Thought than others. These Differences may also arise from the different Humour and Temper of Men, for there is such a Difference even in Men's Constitutions, as inclines some Men to one Way of Thinking, and some to another Way.

But then Christians have not contented themselves with having different Opinions, and different Methods of practising in some particular Instances ; but have indulged themselves in hard Thoughts, and severe Censuring one another. One has judged his Neighbour, and his Neighbour has despised him. Oh how have the Children of God thro' Weakness and Ignorance in themselves been charging *these* and worse Things upon their christian Brethren ! How common is it for the Children of God to place so much of their Religion in those particular Things wherein they differ (or even they think they differ) from others, as to condemn all

TO *Every Child of God,*

all that don't come exactly into the same Sentiments, and run the same Lengths with them? --Nay, it would be a Breach of christian Charity, not to suppose, that even God's own Children have persecuted one another, according to the Power that has been in their Hands: Casting them out of their Communion, and loading them with Reproaches, and inflicting heavy Punishments upon them, nay, I dare not say to the contrary, but that God's own Children have been so far left to their own Weakness, Ignorance and Prejudice with the other remaining Lusts, as to kill one another for their Differences in Religion, thinking herein to do God good Service.

2. *Notwithstanding this, all the Children of God are under the governing Influence of the same divine Spirit in the General.*

Tho' the Difference be sometimes so wide between true Christians as I have mentioned, yet they are united by the Spirit of God, and are in the General under the prevailing Influence of the same gracious Principle.

But here I would not be mistaken; I don't say that in the Things wherein they differ, or wherein they uncharitably censure or persecute each other, that in *these* they are under the governing Influence of the divine Spirit. No, the judging and treating each other in such a severe and uncharitable Manner, is frequently from

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from their Weakness and Ignorance, and too, too often from the Remains of Pride, Passion, and other Lusts, that are found in them. But what I mean is, that some who have gone even to such extraordinary Lengths in contending about religious Matters as I have mentioned, may notwithstanding be under the governing Influence of the same good Spirit, and the same gracious Principle in general, with those they contend with, and treat after such a Manner.

For altho' all the Children of God are led by the Spirit of God, yet this don't suppose the having a *Spirit of Infallibility*; so as to be led into every Truth whether necessary or no, or to be kept from every Error: Nor does it suppose every Saint to be so under the governing and restraining Influences of the Spirit, as to be constantly kept from all out-breakings of Sin and Corruption, or from the Power of every Temptation. This would be a State of Perfection which the blessed Apostle *Paul* had not attained unto *, nor is it to be expected in the present World.

The Spirit of God is not concern'd to have every one that is born of the Spirit, perfectly to agree in all their Thoughts, and in all their Methods of acting, as to the Non-essentials of Christianity; but for wise & holy Ends suffers it to be otherwise. He don't see Cause to save them from every Error, that is not fatal, nor from

* Phil. 3. 12.

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every Degree of Corruption that is not inconsistent with a Principle of Grace. And if we don't allow this to be the Truth, I know no where to find any of the Sons of God. It is the Confession of one of Christ's own Apostle's *That in many Things we offend all †. And who can understand his Errors? Cleanse thou me from secret Faults,* was the humble Acknowledgment and Prayer of the Man after God's own Heart †.

So that Men may run into some Errors in Judgment, and may practise upon these Errors, so as widely to differ from one another, and hardly censure, and severely persecute each other; and yet it is possible they may all of them have the Spirit of God leading and governing them in their general Course.

Nay, I think I may venture to say, that even the gracious Principle that is within them, thro' the Ignorance and Error that God suffers still to abide with them, may be the Means of some of the Contentions of christian Brethren, and of their zealous Persecutions of each other. That is, it is possible that the Aim and the Principle may be good in both Parties, a Concern for the Honour of God and Christ, and for preserving the supposed Truths, and maintaining the supposed Duties of his holy Religion, may prompt both Parties to be severe upon one another.

† Jam. 3. 2. † Psal. 19. 12.

And

And the Error may be only in the Understanding and Judgment, and so in applying this Concern for the Honour of God, and of Religion, in a wrong Case, or in an undue Measure, or in an improper Method.

My Meaning is, that Men who are apparently in great Opposition to each other, may have the *same honest good Principle at the Bottom*. And their Ignorance, Weakness and Mistake is the Cause of their opposing one another. And they are really contending for the same Thing ultimately, but in a different Scheme.

And why should it be thought an extravagant Degree of Charity to suppose this? Don't we see Men pursuing the Profits of this World in very different, yea, in seemingly contrary Ways: And yet we have no doubt but that both of them have a sufficient Love to the World, and real Desires to get what they can of it. One Trader we shall see selling his Goods as dear as he can, thinking that to be the likeliest Way to get an Estate. Another we shall see selling his Commodities as cheap as possibly he can afford, thinking this to be the most probable Way of increasing his Custom, and so that he shall find his Profit in the Conclusion. Now these Men may think amiss of each other, and be offended at each other, especially when their Business may interfere, but who will question, but that they are both set upon gaining the World? And why may it not

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sometimes be so among Men as to the Thing of God and of Religion? Nay, it must needs be so in many of those Cases wherein we see Christians contending with one another. For we shall by an intimate Acquaintance with some of both Parties, be obliged in a Judgment of Charity to rank them among the Children of God.

Who ever doubted but that *Paul* and *Barnabas* were both good Men, eminently holy and good Men; and yet they who had been such intimate Friends and Companions in the Service of Christ and of his Gospel; differ'd at length and fell into such a *sharp Contention*, that they departed asunder the one from the other †. And whoever reads the Occasion of it, will be led to fear that it was not owing entirely to Ignorance and Mistake of Judgment, but that Passion and Self-Will and such like Remnants of the *old-Man*, had a Hand in the Quarrel, which very likely they saw, and were humble for afterwards.

But now you will be ready to say, that if such who are led by the same Spirit even the Spirit of God, do oftentimes so widely differ, and have such fierce Oppositions, wherein do they agree? Or what uniform Influences of the Spirit may be found in them? And this

† Acts 15. 39.

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3. *I am to mention some Instances, wherein all true Christians agree, or some of the uniform Operations of the blessed Spirit upon their Souls.*

For whatever Difference or Opposition there is among Christians; yet the divine Spirit is uniform in his Operations and Influences upon their Souls. And consequently there must be in the general, the same Views, the same Principles governing those to whom the Spirit of God comes in a saving effectual Manner. For altho' there may appear some Diversity in the Operations of the Spirit; yet this Appearance arises from the different Tempers, the different Education, the different Capacities, the different Employments, Temptations and Circumstances of the Persons who are wrought upon, and not from any real Difference in the Operations of the Spirit himself.

1. *With Respect to true Christians (for of such only am I speaking) there is in all of them, the same Principle of FAITH in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, wrought by the divine Spirit.*

Every true Christian is led by the Spirit to believe not only that *God is*, and that he is a *Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; but is also led by the same Spirit to believe that *Jesus Christ is*; and that he is the *only & the almighty Saviour.*

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Saviour. Accordingly every true Believer is led to have his *Dependence* upon the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation.

It is possible that true Believers may have some different Conceptions as to some Circumstances relating to the Way of our Salvation by Christ, and may have different Ways of explaining their Faith in, and Dependence upon him. But they have all really the same Trust in Christ, and hearty Acceptance of him, wrought in them by the Spirit. For this Faith according to the Gospel Covenant is absolutely necessary to the Being of a true Christian, and to his finding Acceptance with God, and obtaining Salvation.

2. *In every Child of God there is the same real SORROW for SIN, and HATRED of it, wrought by the Spirit of God.*

Wherever the Spirit of God works effectually before he *convinces of Sin*, and begets real Grief and Shame for every Thing which Conscience accuses the Man of as sinful, and there is a real Hatred begotten in all such, of every Thing that appears to them as sinful, and there is a Resolution and Care wrought in every such Soul, to depart from all Manner of Sin, *even from their own Iniquity* *, and such a Repentance is the only Repentance unto Salvation.

† Mark 16. 16. * Psal. 18. 23.

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Indeed the Children of God may differ about some Things whether they be sinful or no. For altho' as to moral Sins in general, especially the grosser Ones, they are so plainly set down in the Bible, that nothing but gross Ignorance and great Carelessness would lead Men into any Error as to them, yet there are some Things wherein the Revelation is not so clear, but there may very easily Disputes arise whether *this* or *that* be a Sin or no. But in all the Children of God there is this Principle wrought by his Spirit, heartily to mourn and grieve for all that they are sensible they have done amiss, and to hate and strive against every Thing that appears plainly to them to be contrary to the Will of God.

3. *There is in every Child of God the same Principle of SINCERE and SUPREME LOVE to God and Christ, by the same Spirit.*

This is absolutely necessary for every true Christian, and to his being such an one. For *to love the Lord our God with all our Heart, &c.* is the first and great Commandment *. And unless we love the Lord Jesus Christ above every Thing in this World; yea, and above our very Lives, we cannot be his Disciples †. Accordingly every Child of God has the Love of God and of Christ, shed abroad in his Heart by

* Mat. 22. 37, 38. † Luke 14. 26.

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the Holy Ghost, whereby he has the highest Esteem of God, and of the Redeemer, re- Desires after him, and Delight in him, and a hearty Concern for his Honour and Glory.

But now a Zeal for the Honour of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, for Want of Knowledge to direct it, is oftentimes the Cause of great Divisions, and sharp Contentions among christian Brethren. For one thinks that by these Doctrines, and by these Methods of Conduct, Christ is dishonoured, and so he is zealous against them. The other thinks they rather tend to the Honour of Christ, and so is as zealous for them. In both which Cases they may possibly be govern'd by the same Principle of Love, and have the Honour of Christ equally at Heart. And it is the Ignorance or Mistake of one or both that causes the Difference.

Again,

4. *There is in all of them the same Principle of SUBJECTION and OBEDIENCE to God.*

Every Child of God has a Sense of his divine Authority, and of his sovereign Right to prescribe Laws to all his Creatures, and he looks upon the revealed Will of God in his Word, as the Rule for him to walk by, and the Language of every gracious Soul is, *Whatsoever the Lord my God shall say unto me, that will I do.*

But now the Children of God may differ in their Opinion in some lesser, and more obscure Points,

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Points, so far as that one may think *that* a Duty, which the other thinks rather a Sin than a Duty, and so from the same Principle one may refrain from it, and the other comply with it.

Again,

5. *There is in all the Children of God the same Spirit of LOVE and CHARITY towards Mankind.*

Every Child of God loves his Brother, and in some Degree comes up to the Command, of loving his Neighbour as himself. And altho' a great Part of what passes in the World for *brotherly Love* is mere Counterfeit, and is only *in Word* and *in Tongue*; yet I have so much Charity as to believe that true real Love and Charity is sometimes concealed under such Carriage and Behaviour towards one other as seems very opposite to it.

For we must understand that this Charity to our Neighbour, consists not only in thinking as well as we can of him, but in wishing well to him, and in doing those Things which we apprehend will be most useful and beneficial to him, both to his Soul and Body. And now this gives a great Latitude in the Manner of treating one another; and yet preserving a Principle of Love at the Bottom. And the different Treatment may arise from the different Apprehensions Men may have of manifesting their

their Love to one another. For Charity towards our Neighbour, don't suppose, but that we may see his Faults, and apprehend him to be in Errors, and if so then the Principle of Love may work very differently, according to the different Apprehensions Men may have as to the Manner of treating such a Neighbour, so as will be the greatest Kindness to him.

Thus one who looks upon his Neighbour to be in a Fault, or in an Error, apprehends a mild and gentle Management will best Answer the End, for convincing and reclaiming a faulty Brother, and in this Way manifests his Love to him. Another thinks that such a gentle Way of treating him, would be hurtful to the Man himself, and dangerous to others, and so from the same Principle of Love, proceeds in a more severe and rigorous Manner with him. And now sometimes one, and sometimes the other of these may be in the Wrong in the Application of their different Means to recover their Brother that is in an Error or overtaken with a Fault: And yet they may have an equal Love to him, and an equal Desire to recover him out of the Snare that he is fallen into.

And thus we see how that *all the Children of God are under the governing Influence of the same Spirit, even the Spirit of God*, and are animated and actuated in the general from the same divine and gracious Principle. And the many Differences and Oppositions that are among those,

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those, are no sufficient Objection against this Doctrine. For the Differences and Dissentions that are among them, are about lesser Matters and not the essential Points of Christianity, and they arise from their Ignorance and Short-Sightedness, their Prejudices of Education ; or from the Remainders of Pride and Corruption, which God for wise and holy Ends suffers to be among his Children in the present State.

So that abating the Remains of Sin and Corruption in the Saints ; and all that is necessary to bring them to rights ; that is to a regular uniform Way of thinking and acting, according to the uniform Operations of the Spirit, is to bring them to the same Knowledge and Understanding of Things. For they having the same gracious Dispositions in their Hearts, if they knew as much, and tho't alike, they would manage alike. But because they are weak and ignorant, they *think as Children*, and *speak as Children*, and they scuffle, and often-times quarrel as Children. And they must come to riper Years, to more Knowledge ; yea, to Perfection in Grace, before they will entirely put away those *childish Things*.

I shall conclude at present, and so finish this Proposition, by making two or three *practical Reflections*.

I. Since every Child of God is under the governing Influence of the same blessed Spirit in general ;

22 *Every Child of God,*

general ; notwithstanding the Differences that are among them : Surely *we ought to be very cautious in judging and censuring those who in some Points do differ from us.*

Nothing is more common than for Christians to judge hardly of those who differ from them, either in doctrinal or practical Points. For all are ready to think that *Truth and Right* are so plainly on *their Side*, that they cannot think those to be honest who dissent from them ; but that they wilfully shut their Eyes against the Light. This, I say, is commonly the Way of all Sides, and consequently one Side, or both, must needs be in the Wrong. Surely then it becomes all to be humble and modest wherein they differ, and not be rash in condemning all by Wholesale, who don't come into the same Sentiments, and the same Methods of Management with them. For some of those that you thus judge, may, for ought you know, be under the Leadings of the same *divine Spirit*, and be governed by the same *gracious Principle*, and be the *precious Sons of Zion*, as well as you.

And therefore before you judge hardly of any professing Christians, you must observe, as far as you can, what Spirit they appear to be governed by. But because this lies very much out of your Sight, you must take Care that you don't assume the divine Prerogative.

Instead therefore of your being sudden, and free in your judging of others, especially as to their

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their State, consider whether they don't appear to act from as good a Principle as you. And whether about those Things wherein you agree they don't appear to be as much concerned for the Honour of God, and the Interest of Christ as you. Whether they don't appear to hate Sin, and to love Holiness, as much as you. And in short, Whether they don't appear as conscientiously careful to do the Will of God as you; and if so, why then should you not think as charitably of them as of your selves? Nay, and if they should be so uncharitable as to censure and condemn you, and altho' this should be contrary to the Word and Will of God, and so should arise from their Ignorance, or remaining Corruption; yet you must take Heed of judging and condemning them. For altho' rash judging be a Fault, yet the Case may be such as that there may be so much Ignorance, Mistake and Prejudice in Men's Judgments, that their censuring and condemning others may not be incompatible with a State of Grace. *Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him **.

There are many whom a proud, uncharitable World judge and condemn whom God will receive; for he sees and knows they are govern'd by his Spirit: And many others who are

* Rom. 4. 3, 4, 10, 13.

24 *Every Child of God,*

applauded for eminent Saints will be rejected, because Christ sees they have nothing of the Spirit of God in them. *Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant ; to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Why dost thou then judge thy Brother ? Or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother ? We shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.*

2. *We must beware of abusing the Doctrine before us, by indulging our selves in Ignorance, or giving way to our Corruptions, flattering our selves all the while, that we are in the General under the governing Influence of the Spirit of God.*

Many People are apt to imagine that they are led by the Spirit of God when they are not. And that altho' they differ from this, and the other, & altho' they behave themselves very much amiss ; yet they flatter themselves, that all this is consistent with their being *led by the Spirit of God* in general. But here Men must beware that they don't deceive themselves, as well as others in this Way. For you must remember that Multitudes flatter themselves that they are *led by the Spirit of God*, when they are really led by the Spirit of Ignorance, and this very often wilful and allowed Ignorance : Or with a Spirit of Error and Delusion : And this thro' Carelessness and Sloth, because they will not take Pains to search out the Truth. Sometimes Men

think

think they are inspired with a flaming Zeal for the Glory of God, when perhaps it is all from a Spirit of Pride and Passion, or of a particular Party. And Persons are oftentimes thought to be Men of Steadiness and Constancy, when perhaps there has been only a wilful and an obstinate Spirit all the while. I say, many will flatter themselves that they have a good Spirit, and that they do Things from an honest and gracious Principle, and out of Regard to God and Duty, when perhaps there was only some carnal, corrupt and wicked Principle at the Bottom.

For as the Devil can, and does sometimes transform himself into an Angel of Light, so by his subtle Devices Mens Lusts and irregular Passions will oftentimes so transform themselves as to appear like Vertues and Graces of the Spirit.

You must therefore beware of being deceived this Way. And you must consider that altho' there may be different Opinions, and hard Judgments, among God's own Children; yet that many, and I may say, most of the religious Controversies and Differences, are among those that have the least of the Spirit of God; and very commonly among those that have nothing at all of that good Spirit within them.

If therefore you would judge what Spirit you are of, and by what Spirit you are led, you must see whether you can find those uniform Influences of the Spirit, that are found in all

26 *Every Child of God,*

good Men, and in which they all agree. You must see whether there be that Sorrow for, and real Hatred of all Sin ; whether there be a hearty Faith in Christ, and Dependance upon him, and Subjection to him. Whether there be that sincere and supreme Love to God and Christ, and that fervent Love and Charity to our Neighbour, which the Spirit of God works in every Soul where he dwells.

And if you don't find these Things, you may depend upon it, that you have not the Spirit of God ; how zealous soever you may be for some Things in Religion, and how earnestly soever you may contend for them.

And let me tell you farther, that if these Operations of the Spirit which are found in every Child of God are very prevalent, they will prevent a great many of the unhappy Differences which are among Christians. For the sharp Contentions that are among them are not from the Strength of their Graces, but from their Ignorance, Weakness, and remaining Corruptions. And the more Grace Men have, the less Difference in their Opinions, before less Difference in their Affection. So that when Christians, good Christians, are contending about Matters of Religion, the more fierce and furious they are against one another, the less of the Spirit of God ; for this Spirit, tho' it will lead them to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, even for the fundamental

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Doctrines of Christianity ; yet in lesser and lower Points it will teach them to be humble, meek and modest, and to exercise that Charity towards their christian Neighbours that *suffereth long*, and is *kind*, that is not *envious* and *vaunting*, that is not *puffed up*, nor doth it *behave it self unseemly*,---that is not *easily provoked*,---*beareth all Things*, *believeth all Things*, *hopeth all Things*, *endureth all Things* *. Now therefore when Differences are carried on among Christians without any of this Charity, but instead thereof there is a despising, a judging, and defaming one another, and dividing and separating Principles are freely indulg'd, they only deceive themselves, if they think they are led by the Spirit of God.

3. *How earnest should we be that the Spirit of God would UNITE Christians more and more in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment, which might prevent many of the sinful and unhappy Differences that are among those whom we have reason to hope are led by the same gracious Spirit.*

How earnest should we be that he would scatter the Darkness and the Ignorance that is upon the Minds of some good Christians : And free them more from the Remains of Corruption, from whence their Differences arise. And that he would give them the same Under-

* I Cor. 13. 4, 5, 7.
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28 *Every Child of God,*

standing, and unite them in the same Judgment as well as in the same internal Principle of Grace. For you must know that altho' good Men may think and act very differently in some Things, yet there is a true and a false, a right and a wrong Way. You must therefore pray earnestly that the Spirit of Truth would lead you into Truth, and conduct you in the Paths of Righteousness for his Name's Sake.

And as ever you expect or desire this, you must be honest and upright. *For the Integrity of the Upright shall guide them †.* You must be meek and teachable, *for the meek will be guided in Judgment, the Meek will be teach his Way **. Moreover, you must be submissive and obedient to the Will of God, ready at all Times to comply with whatever appears to be his Will. *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God †.*

In a Word, the Differences that are among good Men, (as I have told you) arise from Ignorance, Weakness, Prejudices of Education, remains of Pride, Passion, Self-Will, and other Corruptions: And therefore the Way to compose these unhappy Differences, is to get more and more from under the unhappy Influence of these Things. And because they will not be thoro'ly purged away till we get to Heaven, so we must wait till we get to those happy Regions

† Prov. 11. 3. * Psal. 25. 9. † John 7. 17.
of

of Light and Love, before we shall see a perfect and delightful Harmony among the Sons of God. Oh ! then, *my dearly Beloved !* how should the Thoughts of this recommend Heaven unto us, and fill us with longing Desires after that blessed Place, where every Error and Mistake among the Children of God will be rectified, where all their Ignorance will be scattered, where all their little Prejudices and Quarrels will be forever laid aside, and where they will think alike, and speak alike, and instead of unhappy Separations and Divisions, will all unite in perfect Love and Charity with one another, and most harmoniously agree in shouting forth the Praises of God, and of the Lamb, who *has redeemed them to God by his Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation.*

A M E N.




30 *The glorious Privileges*



DISCOURSE II.



 **T**HE *first Proposition* I have already spoken to, and shewed *that all the Children of God are led and govern'd by one and the same Spirit.*

Under which I have told you, that the Spirit of God has been striving with the Children of Men from the earliest Days, even before as well as since the Coming of Christ : And that there is no Child of God but what has experienced the gracious Influences of the divine Spirit upon his Soul : And that they are all in the General under the Influence of the same gracious Principle. That however they may differ in their Sentiments as to some particular *Points of Doctrine*, and whatever Difference there may be in their *Forms of publick Worship*, or in their *Modes of Discipline and Government* in the Church : And how hardly soever they may judge, and how severely soever they may censure each other ; yet if they
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be the real Children of God, they have the same divine gracious Principle that they are, in the general, under the governing Influence of. They, notwithstanding all their Differences, and their Separations, are united to Christ, and united to one another, by one and the same Spirit. And I further shew'd you, That altho' they did so widely differ in their Sentiments upon some particular Points, and in their Opinions of one another, and in their Practice relating to Modes of Discipline and Worship; yet there were many uniform Operations of the Spirit upon their Souls, even the substantial Parts of Religion wherein they agreed. Such as *Faith in God*, and in the *Lord Jesus Christ*, sincere and supreme *Love* of the divine Being, a Principle of *Holiness*, and *Hatred* of Sin, and of *Subjection*, and *Obedience* to God, and of sincere and fervent *Charity* to their Fellow-Creatures. For as all these Things are necessary to our being true Christians, so they are wrought in all of them by the Spirit of God. And all the unhappy Differences that are among them, arise from Ignorance and Weakness, from Prejudices of Education, from Pride, Self-will, and the Remains of other Lusts and Corruptions, which God for wise and holy Ends suffers to be in his own Children. And I further observed to you, That a serious Thought upon these Things would correct a great deal of that uncharitable rash Judging that prevails in the World, and would

32 *The glorious Privileges*

would prevent many of the fierce Contentions, the Separations and Divisions, which have rent and torn the Church of God to Pieces.

I now proceed to the second Proposition, viz.

Prop. II. *The surest, and clearest Evidence of our being the Children of God, is our being LED and GOVERN'D by the SPIRIT of God.*

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. This is the very Thing that determines a professing Christian to be a Child of God. If he be under the Influence of a divine and gracious Principle, he is a Child of God, and will be so owned and received by God, let the World think never so hardly of him. On the other Hand, Let a Man make never such a fair Shew in Religion, let his Character run never so high, let him be canonized as a most excellent Saint; yet if he has not been led by the Spirit of God, if he has not been acted from a truly gracious Principle, God will never look upon him, or own him, as one of his Children, but will treat him as a *Bastard*, rather than as a *Son*.

I shall endeavour to illustrate this Proposition by speaking to these general Heads:

I. *It is our highest Privilege and Happiness, to be numbred and found among the Children of God.*

II. *It*

of GOD's Children. 33

II. *It affords unspeakable Comfort, to be well satisfied in our own Minds, that we are the Children of God.*

III. *There are many Things which People are apt to look upon as Signs and Marks of their being the Children of God, which are false ; at least very uncertain, and by no Means to be depended upon.*

IV. *The surest and clearest Mark hereof, is our being led by the Spirit of God.*

I. *It is our highest Privilege and Happiness, to be numbred and found among the Sons of God.*

Indeed it may be said in some Respects, that we are all the Children of God. We are so by Creation, for we derived our Beings from him, and in him we live and move. This the Heathen were sensible of. And one of their own Poets has said, *We are his Offspring.* * And one of the Lord's Prophets says much the same : *Have we not all one Father ? Hath not one God created us ?* † Moreover we may all be called the Children of God, upon Account of the Care and Goodness of divine Providence, that is exercised over and towards us. He takes Care of all Mankind as his Family, he protects and preserves them, he nourishes and brings them

* Acts 17. 28. † Mal. 2. 10.

34 *The glorious Privileges*

up as Children, he feeds them and cloaths them, and supplys all their Wants for them.

But then there are some who are the Children of God by *special Grace*. God of his meer Mercy and free Grace *adopts* some of the Children of Men for his Sons and his Daughters; whom he takes particular Notice of, and confers special and peculiar Favours upon them, beyond what he does upon the rest of Mankind.

Now they are such SONS, such CHILDREN of God as those which my Text speaks of. And THOSE have most glorious Privileges belonging to them, and are truly in the most happy State of any Men in the World. If the greatest Monarch upon Earth should adopt you for his Son, and you should be the *Heir*, or the actual Possessor of a Crown and Kingdom, or of all the Kingdoms of the World, the Riches, the Glories, and the Splendors of them, they would by no Means come up to the Honour, and Privilege, the Safety and Happiness of one whom God has taken into his Family, and made one of his Children by *Regeneration* and *Adoption*, even altho' he should be never so poor and low upon outward Accounts.

Here let me say,

1. *It is a most distinguishing HONOUR to be adopted, and received among the Children of God.*

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Is it any Honour to be descended from, or related to the Kings and Potentates of the World? How much greater Honour to be related to the King of Heaven? What is the Honour of being born of earthly Princes, to what it is to be born of God, to be born of the Spirit of God? Is it any Honour to be Partakers of the divine Nature, to have the Image of God upon our Souls, which consists in Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness; and to be resembling God in all his moral Perfections? Is it any Honour to be restored to the primitive Rectitude, Perfection, and Glory of the humane Nature, which was but *little lower than the Angels, crowned with Glory and Honour?* Furthermore, Is it any Honour for God to own us as his Sons, and to give us Leave to call him Father, and to have the only *begotten of the Father* not ashamed to call us *Brethren*? Or to treat us with Freedom and Friendship as such? Finally, Is it any Honour to be esteemed, and loved, and honoured by God, and Christ, and all the Angels in Heaven, as the excellent Ones in all the Earth? Why! Such Honour have all the *Saints*, all the *adopted Children of God*.

2. *The Children of God enjoy many DISTINGUISHING PRIVILEGES AND ADVANTAGES in this World.*

God having of his free Grace adopted them into his Family, and number'd them among his
D Children,

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Children, he shews the Kindness, the Care, and Tenderneſs of a Father to them. He exerciſeth his Wiſdom, his Power, and his Goodneſs, in contriving and bringing about Things for their Good, and in preſerving, protecting and defending from the Evils of the World; or in ſupporting them under them, or in ſanctifying all unto them. *As a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knoweth our Frame, and remembreth that we are Duſt* †. The Children of God are pitied by their heavenly Father, under all their Weakneſſes and Infirmities, under all their Difficulties and Discouragements he always ſtands ready to ſupport, to relieve, and help them.

God indeed ſuffers them to meet with Troubles in the World, for many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, but then it is *if need be that they are in Heavineſs*; God ſees they need Afflictions, and in Love, and in Kindneſs to their Souls, he afflicts them: But then it is in Meaſure, and in Mercy. The outward Troubles they meet with are not the furious, and revengeful Strokes of an Enemy who ſeeks to kill and to deſtroy; but the gentle Corrections of a wiſe and tender Father, that does not afflict willingly, nor grieve his Children.

And ſuch Corrections as theſe are looked upon by the Apoſtle as Tokens of God's fa-

† Pſal. 103. 13, 14.

erly Love, and a Sign that we are the Children of God. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastning, God dealeth with you as with Sons: For what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without Chastisement, whereof all are Partakers, then are ye Bastards and not Sons †.*

But now here is the peculiar Privilege of the Children of God, that tho' he visits their Transgression with the Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes, nevertheless his *Loving-kindness* he will not take from them, nor suffer his *Faithfulness* to fail. But as it is their Profit that is aimed at by the Father of Spirits when he corrects, so he takes Care to effect it, and turns all to their Advantage. For when he *chastens*, he teaches out of his Law, and causes the Rod and Reproof to give *Wisdom*. He sanctifies every Stroke of his Rod, and causes it to *purge away Iniquity*, to *wean* them from the World, and to cure them of their *Sloth*, and to *quicken* them in the Ways of God. And so altho' the Affliction they meet with seemeth for the present not joyous but *grievous*, in the End it will yield the *peaceable* Fruits of Righteousness. And every Child of God will be obliged in the Conclusion to acknowledge with the Psalmist, *I*

† Heb. 12. 6, 7, 8.

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know,

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*know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in Faithfulness hast afflicted me *.*

But then as God is abundant in Goodness and delights in Mercy, and does not afflict willingly; so this is the Privilege of all God's Children, that he is ready to smile upon them, prosper and bless them upon outward Account so far as he sees they can bear it, and that it will be for their Good. *Godliness bath the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come †.* And God accordingly blesses his Children with the good Things of this Life. They acknowledge him in all Ways, and he directs their Paths for them. He smiles upon them in their lawful Undertakings, and he gives them Power to get Wealth, and surrounds them with the Bounties of his Providence. And some of them that he sees can bear it, he causes Goodness and Mercy to follow them all their Days †.

But as the good Things of *this Life* are not the Portion that God provides for his Children, nor do they desire their Portion in the present World; so it is not common for God's Children to abound with the Riches, and the great Things of this World.

But then here is the distinguishing Privilege of the Children of God, that they are content

* Psal. 119. 75. † 1 Tim. 5. 8.
† Psal. 23. 6.

and satisfied with what their heavenly Father sees cause to deal out to them; they are willing to be at his Dispose, having Food and Raiment they are content, *and Godliness with Contentment is great Gain* *. And God so blesses what he gives them, that it affords more Peace, Comfort and Satisfaction to them, than the overgrown Effects of the Wicked do to them. *Better is a little with the Fear of the Lord, than great Treasures and Trouble therewith. Better is a little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without Right* †.

Again, It is the distinguishing Privilege of God's Children that they have *free Liberty of access* with Confidence to God in Prayer, even as Children to a Father able and ready to help them.

The adopted Sons of God *have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear, but they have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father* ‡. And so they may, and they will come with Freedom and holy Boldness to the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy and find Grace to help in Time of Need ||. No Children can possibly be so Welcome to their earthly Parents, as the Children of God are to their heavenly Father. And he is more ready to hear and answer, than they can be to ask. And he is

* 2 Tim. 5. 6. † Prov. 15. 16. & 16. 8.

‡ Rom. 8. 15. || Heb. 4. 16.

40 *The glorious Privileges*

able and ready to do, and will finally do for them *exceeding abundantly* above what they are able to ask, or even to think. This is their happy Privilege that they may come freely and spread their Case before him, and make known their Requests unto him, and God will hear and answer all their Requests for Things *agreeable* to his *Will*, and for their Good, and in as much Mercy will deny them those Things that will be hurtful unto them. And whatever they receive in answer to their Prayers they are sure to receive his Blessing with it. So God blesses their Blessings, and in such a qualified Sense causes whatsoever they do to prosper.

In a Word, These Children of God are the *special Care and charge of divine Providence*, as well as the Subjects of his special Grace. He is a tender careful Parent, watches over them by Night and by Day, to defend them from innumerable Evils and Dangers that compass them about, unknown to them. And he gives his *Angels* charge concerning them, to encamp round about them; for they are all *ministering Spirits* sent forth to minister unto these Heirs of Salvation. He will make every Thing in Nature and Providence instrumental of their Good, all his *Paths* will be *Mercy and Truth* unto them. He will *lead* them in the *Truth*, and *teach* them, he will have *Compassion* on those of them that are *Ignorant*, and *got out of the Way*; he will *reduce* them from their Errors,

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he will support them under their Troubles, he will comfort them under all their Sorrows, he will enlighten them in all their Darkneses, he will strengthen them against Temptations, he will guard them by his Power, will secure them by his Grace, and uphold them with his free Spirit, and will guide them with his Counsel till he receives them safe to his eternal Kingdom and Glory.

Which leads me to say,

3. *These Sons or Children of God, are HEIRS to a most glorious Inheritance reserved in Heaven for them, which they shall at length be received to the everlasting Enjoyment of.*

Thus we are told ver. 17. of the Context, And if Children then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ. So that every Child of God is an Heir. But what is he an Heir to? Not to the little, fading, uncertain, and unsatisfying Inheritances of this World, that perish in the enjoying: But to the Inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for them. Dearly Beloved, It is an heavenly Inheritance that you are Heirs to, it is a Treasure above the Skies that you have the Promise of. It is in your heavenly Father's House, whither Christ is gone, and where he is preparing Mansions of Glory for you.

Indeed

42 *The glorious Privileges*

¶ Indeed the Children of God must pass thro' the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, before they can come to the Possession and Enjoyment of their Inheritance among the Saints in Light: But the sure and certain Hope of what they are designed for, will abundantly scatter the Fears of Death, and bring the Child of God, that has the Evidence of his good Estate clear upon his Soul, to be as the *Apostle*, willing, yea, *desirous to depart, and to be with Christ*.

And Oh how glorious is the Inheritance they shall enter upon the Possession of, immediately after Death, and especially after the Resurrection, when Soul and Body shall be re-united! How magnificent are the Descriptions hereof in Scripture! Infinitely surpassing all the Riches, the Glories, and the Delights of the present World.

These Children, as I hinted before, are *Heirs*, and they are *Heirs of God*, *Heirs of HIM*, who is the great *Creator* and high *Possessor* of Heaven and Earth, and *joint Heirs* with *Christ*, whom the Father hath appointed *Heir of all Things* *. And agreeable to this we are taught in the Revelations of *John*, 21. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit ALL THINGS, and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son. So that this is the happy Privilege of all the Children of God, that *all is yours* ||. There is nothing you can think

[* Heb. 1. 2. || 1 Cor. 3. 21.

of, that will afford real Happiness, but what will be conferred upon all the Children of God in Heaven. Oh how great is that Good which is laid up for the Sons of God !

They shall be admitted to the glorious Vision and full Fruition of God. They shall see the Lord Jesus Christ *Face to Face*, and they *shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is.* They *shall inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the Foundation of the World, and shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.* They *shall dwell in his Presence, where there is Fulness of Joys, and shall sit at his right Hand, where there are Rivers of Pleasures forevermore.*

And *this is what crowns all, viz. that the Happiness is everlasting, and the Pleasures uninterrupted, and without the least Alloy.* Nay, it is not unlikely but that the Happiness of Heaven will be in an everlasting Progression, some new Discoveries to entertain the Mind, and some new Enjoyment to give fresh Pleasures thro'out Eternity.

And thus I have briefly, and very imperfectly spoken of the Privileges of the Sons of God, and the Happiness they are intitled to, and will at length be brought to the Possession of. And a perfect Description hereof may not be expected, for verily *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man, the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* *

44 *Clear Evidence of our*

I now proceed to speak as briefly to the second general Head, viz.

II. *It is Matter of unspeakable Comfort to have a well-grounded Evidence in our selves, that we are the Sons of God.*

For if there be such glorious Privileges belonging to the Sons of God, surely it must be Matter of great Comfort to be well satisfied upon a good Foundation, that we are among that happy Number. It is safe and happy, to be the Children of God, whether we know it or no; but unspeakably more comfortable to our selves, to be satisfied of it in our own Minds.

Many flatter themselves they are the Children of God, when they are not. And this Apprehension of themselves quiets and comforts them, and sometimes gives them considerable Joy; but now this is but a false Peace, and the Joy of the Hypocrite, which is but for a Moment, and will issue in dreadful Disappointment. For what is the Hope of the self-flattering and self-deluding Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul? Moreover the Peace and Quietness that such Hypocrites have, from a vain Conceit of their being the Children of God, is exceeding dangerous, as it lulls them asleep in carnal Security, and thus their Delusion and Danger may not be discerned till it is too late to help the Matter.

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Adoption, very comfortable. 45

Matter. And therefore it concerns all to examine the Foundation of their Hopes, lest this should be their own unhappy Case.

Others again, who are the true Children of God; yet are very doubtful in their own Minds about it, and very jealous that they are still in their carnal and corrupt Estate. Nay, I believe I should offend against some of the Generation of God's Children, if I did not allow that they were sometimes so in the Dark as to their spiritual State, as to conclude that they are in their Sins, that they are left out of the divine Favour, and fearful whether ever they shall find Mercy with God, and almost ready to sink into Despair.

And now this must needs be a most uncomfortable and distressing State, which not only takes off the Edge of all earthly Comforts; but deprives the Soul of inward Peace, and prevents the Pleasure of sweet Communion with God, and fills the Soul with such fearful Apprehensions of divine Wrath, as even distracts it. *While I suffer thy Terrors I am distracted*, says the holy Psalmist, Psal. 88. 15.

But now to have clear satisfying Evidence, upon a good Foundation, that we are the Children of God, and entitled to all their Privileges, Oh! what Peace, what Support, what Comfort, what Joy must this needs afford unto the Soul!

And

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And now the Christian's Evidences are upon a good Foundation, and his Hopes well grounded, when they arise from his finding that he has heartily *received Christ*, and that he has the Marks of the *New-Birth* upon him, and that he has received the *Spirit of Adoption*, whereby he cries *Abba Father*, and has the *true Temper of a Child*, and behaves in some Measure with the *Fear*, the *Honour*, the *Love*, the *Trust*, the *Submission*, and *Obedience* which becomes him towards his heavenly Father.

And these well-grounded Evidences arise in the Christian's Soul, by a frequent and close Examination, a constant and critical Observation of himself; and the inward Frame and Temper of his Mind, together with the general Tenour of his Life. And these Evidences come to the Soul in the most clear, convincing, and satisfying Manner, when the *Spirit of God* himself, is pleased to assist the Saint in the Trial of himself, and to shine upon his own Work in the Soul, and enables the Saint clearly to discern it, and *so witnesses together with his Spirit, that he is a Child of God*, as in the 16th Verse of the Context.

Furthermore, it may be said, with Respect to these Evidences of Adoption, they are very various as to their Degree in Christians: Some have much clearer and stronger Evidences hereof, than others. There is also a great Difference in the same Christian at one Time and at another.

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Sometimes the Christian's Evidences are so beclouded, by the Remains of Sin, and the Hidings of God's Face, that he can hardly make out to himself that he is a Child of God, his Hopes do but just preponderate his Doubts and Fears. At other Times the Christian has stronger and fuller Evidences, and does more clearly see the Marks of a Child of God upon him; so that his Doubts and Fears are very much scattered, and he has an inward Peace and Quietness of Mind arising, and he walks up and down in the Light of God's Countenance, and there are scarce any Clouds in the Way. At other Times these Evidences are still further cleared up, so as not only to give a satisfactory Proof to the Soul, that he is a Child of God, but to remove all Doubts, to scatter every Cloud, and to give him the *full Assurance of Faith and of Hope* ||.

And now the well-grounded Evidence of our being the Children of God in the lowest, but especially in the highest Degree, must needs afford great Comfort and Satisfaction to the Soul. For as it is our highest Privilege, and our greatest Happiness to be the Children of God; so every truly thoughtful and considerate Mind will be concerned to be well satisfied that this is his own happy Case, and the clear Evidence of it, will afford the greatest Comfort to

|| Heb. 6. 11, --- 22.

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48 *Clear Evidence of our*

him, at all Times, in all Cases, and under every Circumstance, and Condition of Life. As for the stupid and thoughtless Part of Mankind, who are immerfed in the Pleasures of Sense, and swallowed up with the Vanities of the World, some earthly and sensual Enjoyment may please them better for the present, than the clearest Evidences of their being the Sons of God would do. But with every one that is a Child of God, it is not so. For while the many are enquiring *who will shew us any worldly Good,* the Language of the gracious Soul, is, *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me; and that gives him more Joy and Gladness than when Corn, or Wine, or Oyl are increased **.

Here it may be said, that even in the Midst of outward Prosperity, there is nothing affords such Comfort to the gracious Soul, as the Evidence that he is a Child of God. For whilst the Christian is very jealous whether he be a Child of God or no, and his Doubts and Fears prevail above his Hopes, he will be naturally led to fear whether these outward good Things are the Fruit of God's fatherly Love. He will be afraid lest these earthly Goods should be all his Portion, lest they should be attended with a Curse, lest they should prove a Trap and a Snare to him, and be like *the Prosperity of Fools which destroys them* †. And altho' this may be

* Psal. 4. 6, 7. † Prov. 1. 32.

Adoption, very comfortable. 49

very serviceable to the Christian, and make him cautious how he meddles too much, or plunges himself too deep in worldly Hurries, and Cares, or Pleasures; yet it deprives him of much of that Comfort which otherwise he might enjoy in the good Things that God confers upon him.

But now the Man who has a satisfactory Evidence that he is a Child of God, in what an agreeable Manner is he ready to receive the Fruits of divine Bounty? He receives them as the Tokens of God's Favour, and as the Effects of his Covenant-Love, and of his fatherly Care and Goodness; and as what he expects God will bless unto him, and what he can confidently ask a Blessing upon; which serves to enlarge his Heart towards his heavenly Father, and causes him to receive the divine Mercies thankfully, and quickens him to greater Chearfulness in God's Service, and puts him upon improving what he receives more faithfully, to the Glory of the Giver.

But then, on the other Hand, when Persons are under *Troubles* and *Afflictions*, *Difficulties* and *Sorrows*, what is there that can afford them such *Support* and *Comfort*, as the *good Evidence* that they are the *Children of God*? -----

For the clear Evidence hereof will at once suggest to them, that all their Afflictions are only the wise and wholesome Corrections of their heavenly Father, that are designed for, and will finally prove, very advantageous to them, to

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purge away their Iniquity, and to take away their Sin, and to make them Partakers of the divine Heredity. And how wonderfully will the realizing Tho't and Belief hereof reconcile Christians to every Affliction they meet withal? This will help them to submit to them quietly, and bear them patiently, being perswaded, that how grievous so ever they are at present, yet that in the End they will yield the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness. What Support must the Children of God have from their being satisfied they are such, under all their Trials; even under the forest of them, to think that their heavenly Father sends them in Love, and in Mercy to their Souls, that he does not afflict them willingly, but only because he sees they have Need of them, and that he will sanctify every stroke of his Rod, and cause *these light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, to work out for them a far more exceeding & an eternal Weight of Glory?*

Here for Instance, are any of the Children of God, *poor and low* in the World? Why the satisfactory Evidence that they are his Children must needs afford great Support and Comfort to them under all their Poverty, and will enable them to apply the Words of the Apostle to themselves, and draw Comfort from them, Jam. 2. 5. *Hearken, my beloved Brethren, hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?* Again,

Have

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Have you met with Losses and Crosses? Have you lost your Estate, or lost your Friends, your Parents, your Children, your Husband, or your Wife, &c. ? Why if you are but well persuaded that you are the Children of God, and that he is your Friend and Father, this must needs be great Comfort to you, for you may comfort your selves with this, that tho' your earthly Parents forsake you, yet your heavenly Father *will take you up* ; and that tho' all your Friends die and leave you, yet that *your Redeemer liveth*, who can and will be infinitely more to you, than Father, or Mother, or Brother, or Sister, or Wife, or Children, or Houses, or Lands.

Again, Are you under bodily Sickneses and Pains ? Why the Perswasion that you are the Children of God, will comfort you, and quiet you under them ; as it will lead you to think, how much Pain and Sorrow Christ endured for your Sakes, and that he will at length give you Ease and Rest from all your Troubles, and bring you to that blessed State where there will be no more Sicknes nor Pain, and where all Tears will be wiped away from your Eyes for ever.

Again, Are you defamed ? Are you uncharitably judged and censured as a great Sinner, as a carnal unconverted Man, and are many Anathemas denounced against you ? Why if you have but this Testimony that you have

pleased God, and that you belong to his Children, *that* is enough to support you under all the uncharitable Tho'ts, the hard Speeches, and the ill Treatment you may meet withal, for then you may comfort yourselves with what our Saviour said to his Disciples, Mat. 5. 10, 11. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all Manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

Thus the secret Witness, or clear Evidence that we are the Children of God, would be a supporting refreshing Cordial to us, under the heaviest Trials of Life. But now what will the Man do when he is surrounded with Tribulations and Trials of every Kind, and has no Evidence that God is his Friend and Father, but fears and concludes the contrary? What Support can he have under his Troubles, when he concludes they all come in a Way of Judgment, and because God is angry with him; and these appear to be but the Beginning of Sorrows? Oh how insupportable must such Tho'ts as these be! And no Wonder if he should sink under the Weight of them into Impatience, Discontent, Murmurings, and even Despair.

Finally, What is there which can afford such Support and Comfort in a dying Hour, as the clear well-grounded Evidence that we are the Children of God? As

As the Reality of this is the only Thing to take away the Sting of Death, so the full Persuasion of this in our own Minds is the only Thing to take away the Terrors of Death, and reconcile us to the Tho't of Dying. For if we be not satisfied that we are the Children of God, we can't be satisfied of our good Estate. And how awful, how terrible must it needs be, to see Death approaching in good Earnest, and we just launching into the Ocean of Eternity, and be very doubtful which Way we are going, whether into a happy or miserable Eternity! Oh with what Reluctance shall we receive the Message of Death, and how shall we shrink back when this King of Terrors begins to take hold of us, being utterly uncertain how it will fare with us for ever after! And how much more dismal and distressing still will the Case be, if our Fears should prevail much above our Hopes, and especially if in that awful Hour, we should be so despairing of our Case, as that there should remain to us nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to devour us?

Whereas if at such a Time, we have an inward Testimony that we are the Children of God, and so the well-grounded Hopes that we are Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ, to the heavenly Inheritance; how would the Fears of Death be scattered, and how would it reconcile us to a Dissolution? Nay, if the Evidence

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dence of our Adoption be clear, and especially if it comes to the full Assurance of Hope, it will enable us even to triumph over Death and the Grave, saying with the Apostle, *O Death where is thy Sting! O Grave, where is thy Victory! The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law, but Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.* And we shall not only die in Peace, having the Peace of God to keep our Hearts and Minds thro' Jesus Christ, but shall even rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.

Thus we see of what Importance it is, not only to be really the Sons of God, but to have the satisfactory Evidence hereof in our own Souls.

The next general Head is this viz. *There are many Things which People look upon as Marks of their being the Children of God, which are false, at least very uncertain, and by no Means to be depended upon.* But I must leave this for the next Discourse, and conclude at present with some

I M P R O V E M E N T.

Inf. 1. Is it such a high Priviledge and Happiness to be the Sons of God (as we have heard hence how astonishing the Grace of God, that he should bring any of the Children of Men into that happy Number?

* 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57.

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Adoption, very comfortable. 55

Man had by his Sin and Rebellion, cast himself out of the Favour of God, and deserved to be treated as a Rebel and a Traitor, instead of being admitted to the Priviledges of a Son. By Sin we disowned and rejected God from being our God and Father, and he might have utterly disowned us from being his Children. We lost the Reverence and Dutifulness of Children, and he might have utterly withdrawn the tender Pity and Compassion of a Father from us, and so might have rejected us and cast us off forever.

But now for God, instead of dealing with us after such a Manner, to shew a Father's Pity to us, and to find out, and to bring about, a Way whereby we might be restored to all the Priviledges of the Sons of God, it must needs be wonderful Love and Grace in God.

But then the divine Love appears more conspicuous, and more amazing, when we consider the Method which God took, to bring us into such a near and happy Relation to himself.

Thus in order to our becoming the Sons, the adopted Sons of God, he sent HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN AND DEARLY BELOVED SON, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to suffer the deepest Humiliations, the greatest Sorrows, and the most cursed Death, who afterwards arose from the Dead, ascended up into Heaven, where he ever lives at the right Hand of the Father, to make Intercession for us. And by his prevailing Intercession, he procured the sending down the
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HOLY GHOST to apply the Redemption which Christ had purchased : To recover us out of our sinful rebellious State, to work Repentance, and Faith, and Holiness, and to beget a Child-like Temper and Disposition of Soul within us, making use of a great Variety of Means to effect this gracious Change in our Souls, such as the Word, Ordinances, and Providences ; all which the Holy Ghost uses in converting the Soul, in making us the Children of God, and in fitting us for the Inheritance among the Saints in Light. And when he has, by his Grace fitted us for, he receives us to that glorious Inheritance, to those blessed Mansions which Christ is preparing for us.

And now when we consider how unworthy we were of the least Mercy, and what Pity, Love, and Good-will God has shewn to us, and what great and glorious Things Christ has purchased for us, by his Obedience and Death, and what wonderful Things the Holy Ghost is doing for us, that we might be the Sons of God, and enjoy all the Privileges of such, we may well cry out in Admiration and Praise with the Apostle, 1 John 3. 1. *Behold what Manner of Love is this, the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God !* And how should we pray with the Apostle, that we may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height, and

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*know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge. **

Inf. 2. Is it so great a Privilege to be the Sons of God, hence how does it concern us all to be doing that in us lies that we may be of that happy Number?

Since the greatest Privileges, the highest Honours, and the most consummate Happiness, are the Portion of God's Children, who would not rejoice to be found among them? Who would not be striving to the utmost of his Power, that he might be numbred among them, and so be entitled to all their Privileges? If we are really owned and accepted of God as his Sons and his Daughters, we are made, we are in the Way of all true Comforts of this Life, and of all the Glory and Happiness of that which is to come.

Q. But here perhaps the Soul will say, I would be glad to be owned and accepted as a Child of God, but alas, what can I do towards it, God accepts and takes into his Family and among his Children, such as he pleases, and if he will please to take me among them I shall be glad, but alas, what can I do towards it my self?

A. Now in answer to this, it may be said, That altho' it be of the rich and free Grace of God that any are adopted into his Family, and made his Children; yet it is upon some Quali-

** Eph. 3. 18, 19.*

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fications that he sees in Persons, that he receive them into the Number, and gives them a Right to all the Privileges of the Sons of God. You must remember we are not speaking of electing Love, but of adopting Love and Grace. And according to our Catechism, *Adoption* is a Benefit that follows upon *effectual Calling*, and effectual Calling is that whereby we are enabled, by the Help of the Spirit of God, to *receive and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as he is offered to us in the Gospel*. And this we are taught by the Evangelist, is the Pre-requisite to our becoming the Sons of God, and enjoying the Privileges of such. *But as many as RECEIVED HIM, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* † Here we see that *receiving Christ*, and *believing on his Name* is the same Thing; so that believing on Christ is the Heart's receiving him and relying upon him as he is offered to us in the Gospel. And now to all such God gives the Power or Privilege of becoming the Sons of God.

Well then, you see if you would be the Sons of God, and be entitled to all the glorious Privileges of such, you must believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and must receive him with all your Hearts as he is offered in the Gospel, even in every Office that he sustains and executes as our Redeemer, receiving him, rely-

ing upon him, and submitting to him as your Prince, as well as Saviour, endeavouring in all Things to conform your Hearts and lives unto his Gospel. You must receive the only begotten Son of God with all your Heart, if you would be received among his adopted Sons. So that in this you see upon what Terms you are with God. Oh then of what infinite Importance is it that we should believe in the Name of Jesus Christ as he gave us Commandment! If any of you (and it is to be feared that many of you will) fail of becoming the Sons of God, it is because of your Unbelief, it is because you won't heartily receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh then how should you strive against Unbelief, how should you beg of God, that he would deliver you from an evil Heart of Unbelief, and that he would enable you to believe? for Faith is not of your selves, it is the Gift of God, and you must ask it of him, and you must wait upon him in all the Ways he has appointed for the obtaining of this precious Faith. And as *Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*; * so you must be diligent in reading, and in hearing the Word of God; and must take heed how you hear, must endeavour to receive the Word with Faith and Love, laying it up in your Hearts, and practising agreeable to it in your Lives. And in this Way you may hope

* Rom. 10. 17.

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that God will beget the precious Faith of his Elect in you, and give you Power to become his Sons and Daughters, and entitle you to all the Privileges of such, Gal. 3. 26. *For ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.*

Inf. 3. Since it is such an unspeakable Comfort to be well satisfied of our being the Sons of God How should we all labour after as sure and as clear Evidences hereof as we can ?

We are directed & advised, to give Diligence to make our *Calling and Election sure.* * And by the same Rule we should give Diligence to make our *Adoption* sure : *For if we do these Things we shall never fall ; for so an Entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

As to compleat perfect Assurance (whatever some may pretend to and talk of) I am inclined to think it is not attainable in this Life. That great Divine, the late Reverend Mr. WILLARD, treating of Assurance, says, † “ That the highest Assurance in this Life is that which needs strengthening, a Believer’s Grace is imperfect, and his Corruptions potent, and Perfection of Assurance is not consistent with imperfect Grace : Hence Believers are put upon it, to be ever at the Work of Self-

* 2 Pet. 1. 10. † Vide Mr. Willard on the Catechism, p. 507.

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“ Trial.” Which (says the excellent Mr. FLAVEL) * “ If there be such absolute Assurance as to be no Doubt nor Danger, there is no Place nor Room for Examination, or farther Endeavours to make it surer than it is.” And therefore such as talk of their being as sure of their Salvation as of the Death of Christ ; yea as sure of their Salvation as of their own Existence ; they shew that they are carried away by a rapturous Passion or vain Conceit, rather than governed by a solid Judgment.

But then altho’ we cannot attain to Perfection of Assurance, any more than we can attain to Perfection of Grace ; yet we are to be striving after it, and pressing towards it, as we are to be striving after the Perfection of Grace. Altho’ we cannot in this Life attain to Perfection of Grace ; yet we must *press towards that Mark* : So tho’ we cannot attain to Perfection of Assurance, we must press towards it, and make all as sure as we can. We should endeavour after as clear and as full Evidences of our being the Sons of God as possible ; and must be giving all Diligence to be making it surer and surer to ourselves every Day, and that by growing in Grace, which is the surest and best Mark of Adoption.

There is nothing so much worth our making sure as this : Nothing which will afford such real Comfort and Satisfaction to the Soul, or

* Mr. Flavel, Vol. I. p. 669.

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that will help us to conduct and behave properly under all the Changes of Life, as the satisfactory Evidence that we are among the Sons of God. This will help us to receive outward Comforts as the Tokens of God's fatherly Love and Goodness : This will help us to receive Afflictions as the wise and wholesome Corrections of our heavenly Father, designed for our Profit. And this is what will afford spiritual Support and Comfort to us at the Approach of Death. Oh what a Cordial in a dying Hour, to be satisfied in our own Minds that we are the Children of God, and so Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ to the Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reserved in Heaven for us ! This will scatter the Fears of Death, and reconcile us to that which even Nature abhors ; being persuaded that to be absent from the Body will be to be present with the Lord. What is it that we hear People wishing and longing for on a Death-Bed, but that they might have fuller Evidence that they are the Children of God ? And their Language is, if they were but clear in this, they should be willing to die whenever God calls ; and all their Uneasiness, their Fear and Distress of Mind, arise from their Doubts and Uncertainties whether they are the Children of God or no ; and all the World would they give it they had it, to be assured of this one Point. And now how solicitous should we be to get all the Satisfaction possible in this Point, and have

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have it as plain and clear as possible that we are the Children of God? Oh then let us not spare any Labour or Pains to get a well-grounded Perswasion that we belong to God, and have an Interest in Jesus Christ. For altho' an absolute perfect Assurance be not attainable; yet there is such an Assurance of Faith and Hope attainable, as may not only afford Support and Comfort; but what may and does sometimes fill the Soul with Joy unspeakable. And we ought to be striving after the highest Degrees of Assurance that we are capable of in this present State.

But here is a Caution necessary to be laid in, viz. That you don't work your selves up into a vain Confidence and a Sort of Assurance in your own Minds, when there is no real Foundation for it. This is the Way that many a poor Soul has been imposed upon. Persons have been eagerly desirous of Assurance; especially such as have been led to such a false and dangerous Doctrine, *That Assurance was of the Essence of saving Faith*, and so instead of striving after a Faith of Assent, a Faith of Consent, a Faith of Reliance, and a Faith of Subjection to Christ; they leap over all these, to work themselves up into a Faith of Assurance. And when they thus come to feel a Perswasion in their Minds that Christ is theirs, then they imagine they have attained saving Faith, and are assured of their Salvation. But Oh how often

64 *Clear Evidence of our*

is such an Assurance as this built upon the Sand, that will never endure the Trial ! Indeed such an Assurance, such a vain Confidence may hold out to Death with some Persons : *But what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul * ?* Wherefore, my Brethren, it is not the having an Assurance in your own Mind barely ; but it is this having Assurance upon a Scripture Bottom, that you must be striving after.

Moreover, as there are many other Things that christian Professors are apt to build their Hopes upon which are false and uncertain, and not to be trusted to, (which I shall particularly consider in the next Discourse) so these we must lay aside, and must be striving after those Things which the Gospel makes sure and certain Marks of our Adoption, (and which may be hereafter consider'd when I come to speak of the Leadings of the Spirit.) For it is by the *Gospel* that we shall be try'd and judg'd hereafter, and not by any Titles, Rules and Marks that are framed out of Mens Fancies, *the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him another Day †.*

In a Word, here we must strive after the Spirit of Adoption, the true Spirit and Temper of God's Children, and if we take up with any Marks short of this, we shall be disappointed :

* Job 27. 8. † John 12. 48.

But

But the more we have of the child-like Temper in us, the clearer and fuller Evidence we shall have within us that we are the Children of God, *O then be followers of God as dear Children.*



Discourse III.



I am upon the second Proposition, *viz.*

II Prop.  *HE surest and clearest Mark of our being the Children of God is our being led and govern'd by HIS SPIRIT.*

For the illustrating this Proposition I have said,

- I. *That it is our highest Privilege, and greatest Happiness to be the Children of God.*
- II. *That it is an unspeakable Comfort to have a well-grounded Evidence in our selves that we are the Sons of God.*

And

66 *False & uncertain Marks*

And now for further Illustration I proceed to say,

III. *That there are many Things which Men are apt to take up with as Signs and Tokens of their being the Children of God, which are false, at least very uncertain, and by no Means to be depended upon.*

There are scarce any Persons so abandoned, but they are concerned at some Times about their future State, and desirous to be number'd and found among the Children of God; and there are few, but what hope this is their Case; but alas nothing is more common than for Persons to build their Hopes upon the Sand, and to take up with false, at least very uncertain Signs and Tokens of their being the Children of God. Men who are careful enough in their secular Affairs, to be upon a good Bottom in all their Concerns with Men, which are but Trifles: Will be oftentimes satisfied with very slender, uncertain Marks of their Adoption, which is of infinite Importance and Concern unto them.

And now Men's flattering themselves with false Hopes, and taking up with uncertain Marks, is owing very much to their Ignorance, to their Pride, to their Education, to some false Doctrines they have imbib'd, and as much, if not more than any Thing, to their not having their Hearts affected with those Things, and so are very careless about the Matter.

Now

of being the Sons of God. 67

Now what I propose at this Time is to mention several of those Marks and Tokens of being the Children of God, that Persons are very apt to set down satisfied and contented with, which are indeed false, or at least very uncertain Marks of our being the Children of God.

And here I must beseech your diligent Attention and close Self-Application, that you may see how far you have been depending upon those Marks, and whether you have any better to build your Hopes upon.

1. Some flatter themselves that they are the Children of God, because they are descended from them that were so.

That because their Parents were pious, and had an Interest in the special Grace and Favour of God, they feed themselves with Hopes that God has a special Love for them also.

It was a very common Thing for the Children of *Israel* to allot upon great Privileges, because they were the Children of *Abraham*, the Friend of God. They consider'd themselves as the Children of the Covenant that God made with *Abraham*, and looked upon all the Blessings conferred on him to be entail'd on them, without taking Care to be Followers of him in Faith and Obedience. They were ready to think that God would be their God and Father, because he was their Father's God, whether they loved and served the God of their Fathers or no.

And

68 *False & uncertain Marks*

And this is very much the Temper of some professing Christians, they flatter themselves that because they have descended from godly Ancestors, they shall fare the better for it: That they shall be beloved for their Father's Sake: And that because God was their Father's or their Mother's God, he will be their God and Father also.

And altho' Persons would not own it perhaps if the Matter was put to them; yet I doubt not but that there are many, who depend upon finding Favour with God, and have nothing better to ground their Hopes upon, than that they descended of godly Ancestors.

But now this is a false and unsafe Ground to go upon; for Grace don't run in the Blood. Happy indeed is it when God is pleased to cause his Grace to descend from Father to Son, and so from Generation to Generation, which was the Case of *Timothy* and his Ancestors, which the Apostle takes Notice of with Pleasure, that the unfeigned Faith that was in his *Grandmother Lois, and in his Mother Eunice, was in him also* *. But tho' there may be many such Instances among us; yet this is not to be depended upon. God when he adopts a Person into his Family and among his Children, don't oblige himself to adopt his Posterity with him. And if it should be said, that God generally

* 2 Tim. i. 5.

of being the Sons of God'. 69

takes some of the Children of religious Parents into his special Favour; yet it may also be said, that it is not common for all to be adopted by him. Seldom as to a particular Family that the Prophecy of *Isaiah* is accomplished, 54. 13. *And ALL thy Children shall be taught of the Lord*, that is spiritually and savingly taught. For what is more common that to see profane and wicked Children in the Houses of godly Parents? *Isaac* had a profane *Esau* *, *Eli* was a good Man, but his Sons made themselves vile †. The good Prophet *Samuel's* Sons did not walk in his Ways †. *David* had a wicked incestuous Son *Annon* ||, and a rebellious Son *Absalom* §.

So that there is no Dependance upon our being descended from godly Parents; for altho' God has said, *that his Mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his Righteousness unto Children's Children*; yet it is only to such as keep his Covenant, and that remember his Commandments to do them †. Wherefore my Advice to you is the same with what *John the Baptist* gave to the Sadduces and Pharisees that came to be baptized of him, *Bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, and think not to say within your selves, WE HAVE ABRAHAM TO*

* Heb. 12. 26. † 1 Sam. 3. 13. † 1 Sam. 8. 3. || 2 Sam. 13. 14. § 2 Sam. 15. chap. † Psal. 103. 17, 18.

OUR FATHER *. O my Hearers don't think then to say, that you had a good Man for your Father, and a good Woman to your Mother, and that your Grand-Parents were good also, for if you do not follow them wherein they followed Christ, their Grace and Goodness instead of being any Advantage to you, will rather aggravate your Guilt and increase your Punishment, for not taking the Advantage of their Prayers, their Counsels, and their Examples.

2. *Some have great Dependance upon their Knowledge in religious Matters, and upon the supposed Soundness of their Faith, and Orthodoxy of their Principles.*

Some Men have much greater Knowledge in spiritual Matters than others, they have an Opportunity to read, an Inclination to Study, and a Capacity to understand beyond others: And it is not an uncommon Thing for Persons to mistake their thirst after the Knowledge of spiritual Points, for Desires after true Grace, and their Attainments in the Knowledge of spiritual Truths, for the Attainment of saving Grace. Their Understandings are enlarged about divine and spiritual Things, by Reading and Study; and because this affords some Pleasure to their contemplative and studious Minds

* Matth. 3. 9.

they

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they are apt to think they are truly in love with Religion, and that there is a gracious Impression made upon their Hearts ; whereas the Pleasure they take therein is no other than they would take in any other Science they should happen to get their Minds engaged in. And this is a Danger that Ministers, Scholars, and other studious Men are exposed unto. They are in danger of mistaking the speculative Understanding of the Doctrines of the Gospel, for a spiritual saving Acquaintance with them. Some who have been well instructed in the Doctrines concerning God, and the Lord Jesus Christ ; so that they can discourse learnedly, ingeniously and judiciously of the Perfections of God, of the Person and Offices of Christ ; they conclude they have that Knowledge of God and Christ which will be Life eternal to them. If they can discourse well upon the Nature of Regeneration and Conversion, they are ready from thence to flatter themselves that they are converted. If they can describe the Nature of Faith and Repentance, they fancy that they themselves repent and believe. And such as are celebrated for their Knowledge about these Things, and if they are greatly esteemed for their being sound in their Principles, and free from the Errors that others are charged with, and are resorted to for Counsel and Advice in Matters of a spiritual Nature, they are in dan-

ger of thinking too highly of themselves with Respect to their spiritual State.

Moreover, Persons of low Education if by any Means there be some new Discovery made to them, of some speculative Point in Divinity they are sometimes apt to take it for a spiritual saving Illumination ; yea when a Doctrine that they have known very well before ; yet by its being set forth after a different Manner, and in a new Light, they have been ready to conclude that then has been the Time that God has opened their Eyes in a saving Manner.

Finally, Here it is no uncommon Thing for Persons upon their changing their Thoughts and Notions in some Points of Divinity, to mistake it for a Change of their Hearts. They are convinced that they were in an Error in some particular Point, and now embrace the other Side for the Truth, and from hence will date their Conversion.

But now these Things are by no Means certain Signs or Tokens of our being the Children of God. For altho' Knowledge in spiritual Matters, and right Notions in Points of Religion are very desirable, and in some Sort necessary Helps to our being truly religious ; yet they are not true Religion it self, nor are they certain Signs of it.

A Man may have great Attainments in Knowledge, and be able to discourse excellently well upon all Points of Divinity, and be very
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instructive to others ; and yet have no experimental Knowledge of those Things himself. He may speak very justly of Regeneration, and yet be an utter Stranger to the new Birth. He may be able to describe justifying saving Faith much better than some true Believers ; and yet never put forth one Act of such a saving Faith in his Life. Nay, a Man may be much more sound and orthodox as to the Doctrines of the Gospel, than some of the true Children of God ; and yet not be of that Number. And a Man may be recovered out of Errors and Delusions ; and yet not be renewed in the Spirit of his Mind. He may put off his former Thoughts as to some Things, and not put off the *old Man which is corrupt according to deceitful Lusts.*---For Knowledge and Grace are very different Things. The Gifts and Graces of the Spirit don't always go together. A Man may have great Gifts, and no Grace, nay Men have had the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, and none of the special Grace of the Spirit. A Man may have all Knowledge, and understand all Mysteries, and may be able to speak even with the Tongue of Angels ; and yet be but as sounding Brass, and a tinkling Cymbal *, hollow within, void and empty of all true Grace.

* I Cor. 13. 1, 2.

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3. *Some depend upon their making a publick Profession, their belonging to the Church, and their constant Attendance upon divine Ordinances.*

Most who live under the Gospel do make some Profession of Religion. Many make a publick open Profession, they give themselves up to God in Covenant, they come into the Church, and attend upon all the Ordinances of the Gospel. They remember the Sabbath-day, and keep it externally holy; they go to the House of God, and to the Table of the Lord, and are constant in those external publick Duties; and besides these keep up the Religion of the Family, and of the Closet, observing their Morning and Evening Sacrifices with the Household, and by themselves apart; and many Persons have great Dependance upon these Things.

But alas, these are very uncertain Things for Persons to depend upon: For Men may go this Length, and be very exemplary upon these Accounts, and yet all may be nothing, no Evidence of their being the Children of God. For altho' a publick Profession of Christ is a great Duty, and such as live in the careless Neglect hereof have no Reason to think they are the Children of God, and little Ground to depend on the divine Favour while they go on in such Neglect; yet this is no sure Sign that we are in Favour with God, and among his Children. We must confess him before Men, for says Christ, *He that confesseth me before Men, him*
will

will I confess before my Father which is in Heaven; but whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels †. But these external Professions, and outward Attendances, are no sure Signs; a Man may do all these Things, and yet have no Grace in him. We read of Mens *having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof* *. Which is when they make an outward Profession, and attend the outward Form of Religion. And Men may sometimes abound in these, and there be nothing of the Power of Godliness. We also read of some who *have a Name to live, while they are dead* †. Which is when they attend the Externals of Religion, and make great Pretensions to Religion; but have nothing of it in their Hearts. And if the pretending to Religion, the attending religious Duties, and the being Religious in Word and Tongue, and the getting the Name of being Religious among Men would answer the End, it would be no such difficult Thing to be truly Religious. But now what saith our Saviour in this Matter, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the Will of my Father which is in*

† Mark 8. 38. * 2 Tim. 3.5. † Rev. 3.1.
G 3 Heaven

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Heaven ||. *Many will say to me in that Day of Judgment, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy Presence, and thou hast taught in our Streets, to whom he will say, Depart from me, I know you not, all ye that work Iniquity* *. Nay further than this, some will plead in that Day, and say, *We have prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works, but Christ will profess unto them, and say, I never knew you, depart from me all ye that work Iniquity* †.

4. *Some depend upon their being much affected and much enlarged at some particular Times in Duty, as a sure Sign that they are the Children of God.*

It is no uncommon Thing for those who are Strangers to true Grace in their Hearts, to find themselves in very different Frames while they are attending religious Duties. Sometimes they are much more affected and enlarged, than at others. Sometimes the Word of God it self, or some devout Writings have stirr'd up the Affections of Persons in reading or hearing them. And nothing is more common than for unregenerate Persons to be considerably affected with a zealous Preacher, who has sought out some of the most awakening and terrifying Expressions, and delivers them in a moving affec-

|| Matth. 7. 21. * Luke 13. 26.

† Matth. 7. 22. 23.

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honate Manner. How common is it for Persons to be pleasingly affected herewith, they hear with Delight, and the Sermon deliver'd in such a moving Manner, makes some considerable Impressions on them, and puts them upon a greater Seriousness and Thoughtfulness ; And they may be brought hereby to weep, and even to cry out ; and put upon forming some good Purposes and good Resolutions about their future Conduct.

But now all this is no certain Sign of Men's being regenerated, and so the Sons of God ; for such as are Strangers to a gracious Change may, and without Doubt have sometimes experienced something of this Kind. ---- The Prophet *Ezekiel* was to the People *as a very lovely Song, of one that hath a pleasant Voice ; for they heard his Words, and were pleased with them, but did them not **. We also read of *Herod's* hearing *John* gladly †. And we read of some who hear the Word, and anon with Joy receive it ; but yet have no Root in themselves, and so dure but for a while, for *when Tribulation, and Persecution ariseth, because of the Word, by and by they are offended ‡*. And there is great Uncertainty, and as much Danger for Persons to depend merely upon their own Enlargements in religious Duties. Some Persons

* *Ezek.* 33. 32. † *Mark* 6. 20. ‡ *Matth.* 13. 20, 21.

find a great Freedom and Fluency in Prayer at particular Times ; they sometimes find a Liveliness, and feel some Kind of Fervour in the Duty of Prayer ; and upon it their Tho'ts are enlarged, and they perceive suitable pertinent Expressions to flow in upon them : And now such Persons are apt to lay great Weight upon these Things, and look upon them as sure Tokens of their Conversion, and that the Spirit of Grace and Supplication is poured out upon them. But it is no sure Sign at all of true Grace in the Heart ; for there is a Difference between the Gift of Prayer, and the Grace of Prayer : Men may have the Gift of pouring out their Words, when they have not the Grace to pour out their Hearts before God in Prayer. A Man may have a Flow of Words, and no Flow of Grace at all in Prayer. In short, a Man may, according to what the Apostle says, *Speak with the Tongues of Men, and Angels, and yet be nothing.* *

5. *Some have great Dependance upon the Awakenings, and Convictions, that have been stirred up in them.*

There are but few who have been favoured with the free Use of the Gospel, and with a religious Education ; but what have been awakened into some Concern of Soul, and have had

* 1 Cor. 13. 11.

Some Convictions stirred up in them, either by the Workings of natural Conscience, or by the common Motions of the Spirit of God, stirred up in them, upon some particular Occasions. Thus Times of Sicknefs, and of sore Affliction; and Times of imminent Hazard and Danger, frequently are the Occasion of such Convictions. Moreover the falling into gross and scandalous Sins, will oftentimes stir up Conscience so as to lash the Man very severely, and give him most dreadful Twinges, not only for the Sin he has just fallen into, but for other Sins also, which by this Means are bro't to his Remembrance.

And there are also other Times that Persons may be under Convictions, when there can be no external Cause offered for it; and these Convictions may sometimes run to a very high Degree, so that their Sins will stare them in the Face, and the Wrath of God they will see hanging over them, and they are in great Perplexity and Concern about their eternal State, and in great Distress lest they should suddenly drop into the devouring Lake of Hell. And they may, at such Times, be full of their Confessions and Acknowledgments, both to God and Man; acknowledging they are some of the Chief of Sinners, and will freely speak of their Pride, their Hypocrisy, their Covetousness, and their Carnality; and will be asking Forgiveness where they have offended, and will have many Purposes, and be making many Promises of

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of Amendment, and will take some Steps, and go a considerable Way towards a Reformation.

Now these Things Men are apt to depend upon, and to date their Conversion from some such Times as these ; and when they think or are questioned about their Conversion, they will look back to some such Season of Conviction, and quiet themselves with it.

But now this is no certain Sign of Regeneration and Conversion, and Persons may go thus far without any thoro' saving Change : For tho' there be no Conversion without Conviction, yet there may be Conviction without Conversion. Convictions may be meerly from the Accusations of Conscience, from the Fear of Death, from the Apprehensions of divine Wrath, and the Terrors of Hell, without any real Love to God, or Faith in Christ ; and they may be only sudden Pangs, raised by the Apprehension of a present Danger, that go off with the Fright. Thus *Pharaoh* King of *Egypt*, when the Judgments of God fell heavy upon him, he had some Conviction, and acknowledged that he had sinned, and intreated *Moses* to pray for him ; but the particular Judgment was no sooner removed, but his Heart was hardned again. * So the Children of *Israel* were greatly affected at the Terrors and Glories of Mount *Sinai*, when the Law

* *Exod.* 9. 27, 28.

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was delivered by the *Ministry of Angels*, in *Thunders*, and *Lightnings*, and the noise of the *Trumpet*, and the *Mountain covered with Smoke*, and burning with *Fire*. These awful Appearances so affected them, that they promised, that *all that the Lord should say unto them*, by the Mouth of his Servant *Moses*, they would do: But alas, their good Frame went off, and their good Purposes and Promises were forgotten in less than six Weeks after. * And how common is it for Persons at some particular Times, to be under some Convictions, and to be full of Confessions and Promises of Amendment; and yet in a little Time return to their wonted Carelessness, and to their former Courses: *And it happens to them according to the true Proverb, the Dog is turned to his own Vomit again, and the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire.*

6. *Some are taken with, and have great Dependance upon some sudden Pangs of Joy which they experience; but these are no sure Mark of our being the Sons of God.*

As it is not an uncommon Thing for Persons who have no true Grace, to have some Sorrow and Remorse for Sin; so neither is it for them to have a considerable deal of Joy. Persons may pass out of deep Sorrow, into high

* *Exod. 20. 18, 19. Deut. 5. 28.*
Exod. 32. Chap.

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Degrees of Joy ; and from being in Despair, to a Sort of full Assurance. Persons may not only talk of the Love of Christ, and of their Interest in him ; but they may be perswaded in their own Minds that they are among the Number of his redeemed chosen Ones, and they may sometimes be raised up even into such a Transport of Joy as to overcome their Natures, and yet it may be a false Joy, and the Foundation of it may be very defective. For there may be a Sorrow about Sin that is not a godly Sorrow, so there may be a Joy that is not a true spiritual Joy. Which may be stirred up mechanically, and by some Influence upon the animal OEconomy, or from Ignorance and Mistake about themselves, and Things of a spiritual Nature. We read of a *Generation pure in their own Eyes ; and yet are not washed from their Filthiness **. And no wonder if they should cry *Peace, Peace* ; tho' there be no Peace belonging to them. And we read of the *Hope of unjust Persons †*, and of the *Joy of the Hypocrite* which is short and but for a Moment †. For what becomes of the *Hope and Joy of the Hypocrite, tho' he hath gained, when God taketh away his Soul || ?* Surely the *Laughter*, and so the Joy of such, is like the *Crackling of Thorns under a Pot **, which makes a Noise

* Prov. 30. 12. † Prov. 12. 7. † Job. 20. 5. || Job. 27. 8. § Eccl. 7. 5.

and

and Blaze, but presently go out, which contributes but little towards the Boiling of the Pot, because that requires a more steady Fire.

7. *Some have great Dependance upon their Reformation as to some particular Vices.*

A partial Reformation is no uncommon Thing among those who are yet in their State of Unregeneracy. There are some Vices that some Sinners more easily reform and refrain from. Thus those Sins and Follies that youthful Age is subject to, are frequently reformed, when Persons come to riper Years. Other Sins there are that Persons refrain from, meerly for Want of the same Opportunities and Temptations which they had before; and this they take for real Reformation, whereas their Hearts are much the same. Some again refrain from this and the other Vice, from prudent, political, worldly Considerations. They find that they impair their Health, bring on Pain and Sicknefs, and hinder them from other worldly Enjoyments, and tend to shorten Life; and from these Considerations they refrain. Others again abstain from this and the other Vice, because it wasts their Effects, and their Circumstances won't allow it. And others because it hurts their Character, and will bring on Disgrace, or hinder their Promotion. But now you may easily see how little these are to be depended upon. For if Men only reform as to some

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Sins, and yet live in others ; it is a Sign there is no true Grace in the Heart, and that such a Soul has not passed thro' a regenerating Change : For where there is true Grace, there will be the breaking with every Sin. The Language of a truly gracious Soul is that of the Psalmist, 119. 128. *I esteem ALL thy Precepts concerning ALL Things to be right, and I hate EVERY false Way.* Yea, there must be a departing from our own Iniquity, if we would give a sure Sign of our Uprightness before God *. We must lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that most easily besets us, if we would run the christian Race †.

8. Others again have great Dependance upon their being just, and true, and honest in their Dealings, as a certain Mark of their being in a State of Grace.

There are many Persons in the World, whom if you should ask them, what Reason they had to think they were the Children of God, or what they grounded their Hopes of Heaven and Happiness upon ? Would answer, That they have never wronged any Man (as they know of) in their Lives, that they have dealt fairly and justly with all Men, that they have been careful to pay their Dues both publick and private.

* Psal. 18. 23. † Heb. 12. 1.

And now this, if it be true, is an excellent Thing, and it is what the Gospel teaches and requires, and wherever the Spirit of God comes it always works such a just and honest Principle in the Soul, which will put the Man that is under the Influence of it, upon dealing justly with all Men, and speaking the Truth to his Neighbour ; and without this it is in vain for a Man to pretend to be a Christian.

But now a Man's being fair and honest in his Dealings is of it self, by no Means to be depended upon. For this may be owing, partly to a Sort of native Simplicity that some Men have ; or it may be partly from the Manner of their Education, where they have never seen the Way of the World, and the hidden Things of Dishonesty, that are practised in it ; or it may be from a political Consideration, governing themselves by that common and good Maxim, *viz. that Honesty is the best Policy.* Persons may be very fair and honest in their Dealings, merely for the Sake of gaining Credit and Custom, and so of enlarging their Business and their Income, without any Regard to God, or their Duty therein ; but only as the most likely Means of promoting their worldly Interest. And so it may be said, that some People are fair in their Dealings, from the same Views that others are unfair and dishonest, merely to get more of the World, either of the Praise or of the Profit of the World. And

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here, altho' I do by no Means put the honest and the dishonest Man upon a Level ; yet it is possible they may both be acted from the same carnal and worldly Principle ; even a Desire to get the World. One takes this Way, the other takes that Way, to increase his worldly Goods ; and as for any Regard to God and their Duty, they don't come into Consideration by either of them.

9. *Some have great Dependance upon their generous and charitable Practices, as Marks of their being the Children of God ; but they are, by themselves, very uncertain ones.*

Some Men appear to have a great deal of Generosity in their Tempers ; they seem to be of a loving friendly Disposition. They will say that they owe no Man any ill Will, and it don't appear that they do : We shall find them very neighbourly, and ready to any Acts of Kindness that any about them stand in need of. They appear tender hearted, and compassionate to those in Distress, and will often go a great Way in giving Relief unto them ; lending, or giving, assisting, and defending them, as their Cases call for, and as they have Ability. And we may see they do many generous Actions, encouraging Acts of Charity, not only by their Words, but by their Example ; and will shew very much of a publick Spirit, promoting Things that tend to the publick Good, and will scorn to

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And now this is a very lovely Temper, and
recommends Persons to the Esteem and Delight
of all that know them. And this is a Temper
and Practice which the Gospel requires, and
which Christ himself recommends by his own
Example, whose whole Life was a continued
Act of Goodness and Kindness to Man ; and
such a Temper is always to be found where the
Spirit of God is at work in good Earnest ; for
the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness. *

But yet there may be a great deal of this
Temper operating, without any true Grace ;
and in such as are the Children of the wicked
One, rather than the Children of God. For
there is such a Thing as Good-nature : That
is, some Men in their very Make and Consti-
tution, are more inclined to peaceable, loving,
kind, and generous Actions, than others. Some
Men are more mild and gentle in their Tem-
pers, and have less of Anger and Resentment
than others. And some have a more tender
and compassionate Temper, and are more sen-
sibly affected with the Difficulties and Distresses
of their Friends and Neighbours, than others.
And some are naturally more open hearted, and
more free to give, than others.

* Eph. 5. 9.

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Moreover

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Moreover the Manner of Men's Education may have a great Hand in this ; they are bro't up in an open, free, generous Way of living, and under an Apprehension of it's being mean and base to appear close and covetous : And some are bro't up in such a Way, as that nothing appears more disgraceful to them, than to be penurious and close ; nor is there any Thing they are more afraid of, than not to be tho't generous and open hearted, and many Times will go beyond their Abilities in their Entertainments and Ways of living, for fear they should be tho't Niggards and Misers. And now this springs from Pride rather than any true Generosity, and from an unreasonable Fear and Concern about their own Character, rather than from any true Regard to God and his Honour.

Moreover, there is the same Pharisaical Spirit in the World that was in our Saviour's Time, when they *did their Alms to be seen of Men, and to have Glory of Men* *.

Furthermore, it is no uncommon Thing for Men to treat each other with great outward Civility and Respect ; yea, and to heap many Kindnesses upon them, when there is Envy and Malice in their Hearts.

Finally here, the Apostle supposes a Man may go so far as to *give all his Goods to feed the*

* Matth. 6. 2.

Poor, and not have the Grace of Charity, and consequently to be nothing †.

10. *Some have great Dependence upon the good Opinion that others have of them.*

If their Reputation runs high for serious and religious Persons, and they understand that this is their Character among Men; it is very apt to raise their Opinion of themselves, and it is exceeding natural for Persons to fall in with the good Opinion that others have of them. But now what is more precarious or uncertain than this? How many are there that bear a good Name and Character, that are very unworthy of it, while others that are much more deserving, are defamed and condemned? But then if any Person who is in great Esteem for his own Experiences, and for his Skill in examining and trying Men's spiritual State, shall pronounce upon some such, when they have examined, that they are converted, and shall upon it call them the dear Children of God, they are very apt to conclude at once that it is so, and to look upon themselves as God's Children. But now this is a very uncertain and unsafe Way of determining the Matter as to our spiritual State. For alas, what is more fallable than the Judgment of Man, especially when he undertakes to judge about the Hearts

† 1 Cor. 13. 2.

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of others? It is exceeding difficult for Men to find out their own Hearts so as to judge fully upon them, how much more difficult to judge the Hearts of others. If Men are apt to deceive themselves, Oh how easy is it then to deceive others! Nay, some of these that undertake to judge the State of others, may be dreadfully deceived and deluded as to themselves, and then no wonder if they should be deceived as to others, and be the Means of deceiving them. Moreover, some real Christians may have an Excess of Charity, that is they may sometimes judge too favourably of others, and think they are the Children of God when they are not. So that altho' it may be very proper for Persons to lay their Case before experienced Divines, and converse with experienced Christians about their spiritual State? yet there must not be too great Stress laid upon their Judgment; but you must remember that *Man looks at the outward Appearance, and that it is God alone that looks to the Heart*, and that sees to the Bottom of it. And you must be sensible, that many and many a one who has been number'd among the Saints of God on Earth; yea, and had in high Reputation for their Piety and Goodness, will be ranked with Sinners in the Day of Judgment. Who were in greater Reputation for Piety and Sanctity than the Pharisees of old? and yet Christ pronounces them gross *Hypocrites*, and

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and such as should receive the greater Damnation ||. And Philip himself was mistaken with Respect to Simon the Sorcerer, when he baptized him, and received him among the Faithful *. Which shews how unsafe it is to depend upon the good Opinion or Judgment of others with Respect to the State of our Souls.

11. *There is a Sort of Love to God and Christ which some Persons have, and depend very much upon it, as a Mark of their being the true Children of God; and yet it is a very uncertain one.*

The true Love of God and Christ, is one of the best Evidences that we are the Children of God, for *God is Love, and every one that loveth is born of God †*. But yet there is a Sort of Love, and an Appearance of Love, which People are apt to be deceived with, which is no Sign of our being the Children of God.

Thus there is a *loving in Word and in Tongue*, which some at length come to perswade themselves is a real hearty Love, that is, some People take delight in discoursing about Christ, and about Matters of Religion, and especially about their own supposed Experiences, and particularly of the goings forth of their Souls as they imagine in Love to God and Christ, and they by frequent speaking of these Things without a

|| Matth. 23. 14. * Acts 8. 13, 23.

† 1 John 4. 7, 8.

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careful Examination, they are at length persuaded that they do truly love him, when perhaps there may be no real Love in their Hearts, nor any manifest Token of it in their Lives, none of that which Christ makes the standing Mark and sure Sign of true Love to him, *even the keeping his Commandments* *.

Again, there are some that think they love God and Christ, and so are the Children of God; because they love to attend upon some religious Duties, they love to read, they love to hear, they love to meet together for religious Worship, and for Conversation about religious Matters, and sometimes they are in such an earnest Frame about these Things, that they know not how to let slip any Opportunity for meeting together that occurs. And now there is a great Shew of Love to God in these Things; and it must be said, that where there is true Love to God there will be a Love to his House, a Love to his Worship, and to his Ordinances. But yet there is a Sort of Love to these Things, that is no certain Sign of Love to God, or of our being his Children. A Man may love religious Assemblies and religious Exercises upon some Accounts; and yet not truly love God. When there was but very little of the Love of God or of Obedience to him among the Children of *Israel*, they abounded in Sacrifices, so

* John 14. 21.

of being the Sons of God. 93

that God was full of them and weary of them †. And speaks of it to the Reproach of that People that they seemed to love and delight in religious Services, when they had no real Regard for him. *Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my Ways, as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinances of their God, they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice, they take Delight in approaching to God *.* Herod heard John gladly ‡, but was very far from loving him, or Christ whose Messenger he was. *Stony ground Hearers receive the Word with Joy, but are not rooted and grounded in Love.*

Again, Some mistake and think they love Christ so as is a good Sign of their being the Children of God, because they find themselves much affected with a lively Description of the Sufferings and Death of Christ, when perhaps the same Affections might be raised by reading or hearing any other affecting Tragedy, at least if they saw one acted upon the Stage. Christ's Sufferings may be described in such a lively Manner as to work very powerfully upon the Imagination and Affections, even so as to draw forth Tears, yea, to cause Schreetches and Screaming out, and yet there may be no true Love to him.

† Isai. 1. 11, 12. * Isai. 58. 2. ‡ Mark 6. 20.

Again,

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Again, Persons may mistake as to their Love to Christ, and so their being the Children of God, this Way, *viz.* they are filled with Distress and Terror because of the Wrath of God and the eternal Torments of Hell-Fire they are exposed unto, and the Apprehensions that Christ will deliver them from Death, and Hell, and eternal Misery, excite some Love and Affections in them to Jesus Christ; but it is perhaps merely upon this Tho't of his being their Deliverer from Misery, without any Consideration of those amiable Excellencies and Perfections in him, which demand their highest Esteem, Love, and Delight. They love him only as a Man would love another that should go into the Water and pull him out when he was just sinking and drowning, he will in the Time of it have some grateful Sense of his Kindness, and will find some considerable Love going towards him, and yet perhaps may have no inward Esteem for him; may have no Regard for him, but only for this one Act of Kindness.

Thus Persons may be pleased with the Tho't of having Christ for their Saviour, to save them from Hell and Misery; and yet have no proper Esteem of him for his own real amiable Excellencies, so as to love him upon the Account of them; they may love him for his Goodness and Kindness to them, but not for his Wisdom, his Justice, his Truth, and Holiness: They may love him for a Saviour, but not for a Sovereign,

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reign, they may love him for purchasing a Pardon; but not for his Precepts and Rules of living: But this is not a true Love. For where there is the true Love of God's Children, there will be a loving Christ for his own Sake, and for what he is in himself, as well as for what he is to them. They will be pleased with him as well for being a Prince, as a Saviour; and will be as much pleased with the Thought of being delivered from the Power, as from the Punishment of Sin.

12. *Many have great Dependance upon their acting Conscientiously, and being fearful of doing any Thing that will stir up their Consciences against them. But now, in some Respects, this is an uncertain Mark of being the Children of God.*

Many there are, who conclude they are the Children of God, and draw great Comfort to themselves from this Consideration, that they make Conscience of their Ways, and that they don't allow themselves in offending against their Consciences, or in doing any Thing that their Consciences would accuse them of. And besure this bids fair for a certain Mark of a true Christian and Child of God. The Apostle's Advice to others was to *have & keep a good Conscience* *. and they exercised themselves to *have a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards*

* 1 Pet. 3. 16.

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Men †. And their rejoicing was this, the *Testimony of their Consciences*, that in Simplicity, and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, they had their Conversation in the World †. And Baptism is said to save us, not the putting away the Filth of the Flesh, *but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God* * And yet after all we must carefully distinguish here about Conscience, or we may be mistaken.

Thus we must distinguish,

1. *Between Conscience in the full Extent and Latitude of its Dictates, and in the restrained limited Sense in which it is frequently taken.*

Thus considering Conscience in the full Extent of it, and it teaches us that we ought to aim at the Glory of God in all we do, and that we should keep his Commandments out of Love to God, and from a Principle of Obedience, and with sincere Desires of pleasing, and glorifying him thereby.

Moreover, Conscience enlightened by divine Revelation teaches us to do all we do in the Name of Christ, and in Dependance upon his Grace to help us, trusting to find Acceptance only thro' him. Now taking Conscience in such a large Sense and it dictates the whole of

† Acts 24. 16. † 2 Cor. 1. 12.

* 1 Pet. 3. 21.

Christianity to us, and consequently to comply with the Dictates thereof, is to come up to the Precepts and Principles of Christianity. And such as go this Length in complying with the Dictates of Conscience, may upon good Grounds conclude they are the Children of God.

But taking Conscience as it is more frequently and commonly understood, and it intends no more than its dictating to us that this and the other is to be done by us, as our Duty ; that this and the other is a Sin, and must be avoided, without considering so much how and after what Manner it is to be done either with Respect to God or Christ. Conscience, according to the common vulgar Understanding of it, don't so much respect the Principle, the Views, and the Aims respecting God and Christ, as the bare doing or not doing the Thing. And now I say taking Conscience in this restrained Sense, and a Man may be conscientious, that is careful to do this and the other Duty, and to avoid this and the other Sin ; and yet it may be no certain Sign of his being a Child of God.

2. We must distinguish between our Regards extending ultimately to God, and their terminating in Conscience.

Altho' we are to have a constant Regard to Conscience, and must govern our selves by the Dictates thereof in all we do ; yet our Tho'ts and Views, our Subjection and Obedience must

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must not terminate in Conscience. But we must look beyond Conscience unto God, whose Will and Command is our only Rule, and Conscience is not to be regarded, only upon the Supposition of its dictating the Will of God to us. Conscience is to be consulted upon all Occasions; but yet it must not be considered as our Sovereign and supreme Lord, but only as God's Deputy and Vicegerent in the Soul. We must obey Conscience not meerly because it is the Voice of Conscience, but because we look upon it as the Voice of God, and as dictating the Mind and Will of God unto us. And so our hearkening to the Dictates of Conscience must be in Obedience to God, and because we look upon the Dictates thereof as the Will of God made known unto us. For unless we thus carry our Thoughts and Principles of Obedience beyond Conscience unto God, we shall make Conscience to be our God and Sovereign, to the Neglect of the great God himself, who is the Lord of Conscience. And even an Atheist might go so far as this, he might hearken to his own Conscience according as it judged Things to be right or wrong, and God not be in all his Thoughts. Consequently, if we may suppose a Man to govern himself by Conscience, without any ultimate Regard to God, and he would be mistaken if he should look upon himself a Child of God.

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3. *We must distinguish between a free and voluntary Obedience to Conscience, and a servile slavish Subjection to it.*

Men may follow the Dictates of Conscience, but not out of any love to, or delight in what they do : They may be even compelled and forced to it, for fear of the Lashes of Conscience afterwards. And so to prevent the Trouble and Distress of Mind they know they shall be in, if they don't hearken to Conscience ; they submit to this and that which Conscience tells them they must do.

And this is the Case with many Persons, they refrain from many known Sins, not because they really hate them, and they comply with many known Duties, not because they love and Delight in them ; but merely out of Fear of their Consciences, lest they should rise up against them, should accuse them, and should give great Trouble and Distress of Mind to them.

And now the Vertue and Goodness of such refraining from Sin, and complying with Duty, seems to be no more than when a Man refrains from such and such a Sin, merely for fear of some bodily Pain and Punishment.

For what is the real Difference in the Principle, when a Man refrains from a sinful Action for fear of a whipt Back, or some bodily Pain that it may naturally cause ; and when it is merely to escape the Pain of the Mind, the

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Girds and Lashes of a guilty Conscience ? You must remember that I say, when it is wholly and merely for fear of this. For that the Fear of Conscience, and its severe Lashes, is, and may be, an Argument with us to restrain us from Sin is undoubted, and so may the Fear of bodily Pain or Punishment. But when it is only this Fear of the Lash of Conscience that dictates and hinders us, it is a servile Fear of Conscience, rather than a gracious child-like Fear of God ; and so is by no Means a Proof of our being the Children of God.

And thus we see how that Conscioufness considered in some Respects is a very different Thing from true Godliness : And thus a Man may in some Sense be a conscientious Man, and yet no true Child of God.

I have insisted the longer upon this Head, and been more particular in making the Distinctions, because it is shocking at the first Tho't to many, to say, that making Conscience of their Ways is not a certain Sign of their being the Children of God ; and that Persons might see what I mean by it, and that they might not commit a Mistake in this Point, and so miscarry at last : For this is a very dangerous Rock upon which many are lost, and the peculiar Dangeroufness of it lies in this, that it is not so easily discerned as some others.

And thus I have mentioned some of the many false and uncertain Marks of being the Children

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Children of God, by which Multitudes have been, and are deceived. I say some of the false uncertain Marks, for there are a Multitude more from which Persons take occasion to flatter themselves into vain Hopes of their good Estate, to their eternal Ruin. But what I have said is abundantly sufficient to ground this one *practical Reflection* upon, with which I shall conclude the present Discourse, viz.

Since there are so many Things which we are apt to depend upon as Signs of our being the Children of God, that are false, and at best but uncertain Marks hereof ; Oh ! with what a godly Jealousy should we be jealous over ourselves, and with what holy Fear and Trembling should we be working out our own Salvation !

Here we see that there are a Multitude of Ways for Men to deceive and delude themselves, even in Matters of the highest Importance, and of infinite Concernment to them. Innumerable Ways of raising our Hopes and Expectations of Safety and Happiness in the future eternal World, and all upon a sandy Foundation that will fail us in the Conclusion. And the Wretchedness of it is, that we willingly deceive our selves, and suffer our selves to be deluded. And Oh ! what Multitudes have flattered themselves with false Hopes, and for want of due Care, have never found their Mistake, till it was past all Remedy ! How jealous then

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then should we be of our selves ! and how fearful lest this should be our own dreadful Case. When I consider the many false and uncertain Marks there are of our being the Sons of God, and the innumerable Ways that a subtle Devil and our own deceitful Hearts have to deceive us, I am shocked extremely to hear People talk with so much Confidence, as some have done, about their good Estate. When People will say they are as fully assured of their future Well-being as they are of their present Existence, and that they know as certainly that they are born of God, and are converted, as that they are born of their earthly Parents : I say when Persons talk with such Confidence as this, and yet at the same Time acknowledge that they are but newly converted, and so have had but little Experience ; it looks as if they had not thoroughly considered of the many Ways in which Persons are liable to be deceived, and I doubt not but that Length of Time, and a fuller Experience, will abate their Positiveness, and lead them into a more modest Way of expressing themselves about these Things. Surely if Persons did but duly consider the Deceitfulness of Men's Hearts, and the Subtilty of Satan, and the innumerable Ways in which Men have been deluded, they would humbly enquire whether a deceived Heart hath not turned them aside ; and instead of talking with such an Air of Confidence as some have done, they

of being the Sons of God. 103

they would say, *Search me, O God, and know my Heart, try me, and know my Tho'ts; and see if there be any wicked Way in me, and lead me in the Way everlasting.* *

Dearly beloved, let every one of you that pretend to any Hopes of your good Estate, consider whether you have not been feeding upon Ashes, whether you have not had your Dependance upon some of these false and uncertain Marks? Whether you have any better Foundation for your Hopes, or supposed Assurances, than some of those Marks which Hypocrites may have? Whether your Confidences are not vain, and your Refuge a Refuge of Lies, that will quickly be swept away.

Oh that you were sensible of the vast Extent of Christianity, and how difficult it is to be a thoro' Christian, and how exceeding apt Persons are to *think they are something, when indeed they are nothing, and so deceive them selves.* Wherefore to prevent any fatal Mistakes in this Matter, you must diligently study the Nature of true Christianity in the full Extent and Latitude of it, and not take up with only some particular Part or Instance of it. But seek to God for such a Principle of Grace as may prompt you to every Part of the Christian Life. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have Respect to all thy Commandments.* I shall conclude with

* Psal. 139. 23, 24.

these

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those awakening Words of our blessed Saviour,
Matth. 7. 14, 15. *Enter ye in at the strait Gate,*
for wide is the Gate and broad is the Way that
leadeth to Destruction, and many there be which go
in thereat ; because strait is the Gate and narrow
is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and few there
be that find it.



Discourse

Discourse IV.

I am upon the second Proposition, vizt.

Prop. II. *THE* surest and clearest
Mark of our being the
Children of God, is our
being LED and GOVERN-
ED by HIS SPIRIT.

Under which I have said,

1. *It is our highest Privilege and Happiness to be numbred and found among the Children of God.*

2. *It is Matter of unspeakable Comfort, to have a well grounded Evidence in our selves, that we are the Children of God.*

3. *That there are many Things, which Persons are apt to take for Marks and Tokens of their being the*

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the Children of God, which are false, at least very uncertain, and by no Means to be depended upon.

I now proceed to say,

4. *That the surest and clearest Mark of our being the Children of God, is our being LED and GOVERNED by HIS SPIRIT.*

Doubtless you would all be glad to know that you are the Sons of God, and many of you I believe are inquisitive about it, and looking out for Signs and Marks of your Regeneration, and so of your being among his Children ; well let me tell you from God himself, that this is the most sure, yea the only certain Mark of it ; even your being led and governed by his Spirit. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.* So many as are led by his Spirit, are his Children, and no more. Let their Profession and their Pretensions be what they will ; if they be not led by his Spirit, and are not under the Government of a gracious Principle, they are not his Children ; whereas, every Person that is led by this blessed Spirit, let them be never so much despised, let them be never so hardly censured and condemned and hated by the World, yet God will own and love them, and treat them as his Children.

But then this Question naturally arises, *How shall I know whether I am led by the Spirit of God or no ?* You will be ready to say, I doubt not but that all who are led by the Spirit of God

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of a true Child of God. 107

are his Children ; but the great Difficulty is to know whether I am led by his Spirit or no ? Many have thought that they have been led by this good Spirit of God, and have been very confident about it, when really they have been govern'd only by their own Spirits, or deluded by the Devil that wicked Spirit ; and there are (as has been said) a Multitude of Ways wherein Persons are deceived about their being led by the Spirit of God ; how then shall I know whether I am so governed by him as to be a sure and certain Mark of my being a Child of God ? Well then, this is what I propose by the Help of God to shew you at this Time, namely, *When Persons are so led by the Spirit of God, as to be a sure and clear Mark of their being the Children of God.*

Let And now this, my Hearers, demands your diligent Attention, and careful Observation ; for you must be sensible there are some Things that look like the Leadings and Workings of God's Spirit, which indeed are but the natural Workings of our own, and it is very difficult to distinguish some of the Workings of refined Nature from true Grace, and Men are exceedingly apt to be mistaken herein, and have many times taken this and that to be the Workings of the Spirit of Grace, when really they are the Workings of their own Imaginations or Passions. What I propose therefore is to give you some of the clearest and best Marks I can, of our
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being led by the Spirit of God, and of our being under a divine and gracious Influence in what we do ; by which, if we do not mistake in the Application of these Marks, we may in some good Measure judge what Manner of Persons we are.

And here I shall not consider any of the extraordinary Gifts, or miraculous Operations of the Spirit of God, in which the Holy Ghost fell upon the Apostles, in the Day of Pentecost ; for these extraordinary and miraculous Gifts, are distant from the Graces of the Spirit, and are in their Nature separable from them, and so are no certain Signs of our being the Children of God. Men may have those Gifts of the Spirit, and not be the Sons of God ; for Gifts and Graces don't always go together, no not those extraordinary Gifts. *Many will say in the Day of Judgment, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works, to whom Christ will say, Depart from me ye that work Iniquity* *. So that even these extraordinary Leadings

or miraculous Operations of the Spirit, are no infallible Sign of Grace, and so not of our Adoption, therefore I shall say nothing of them.

Neither in the second Place shall I take Notice of such Things, as the Workings of God's Spirit may be only the accidental Causes of

* Matth. 7. 22, 23.

and which Things may be, and oftentimes are, produced by some other Causes. That is, I shall not speak of any extraordinary Commotions of Spirit or Body, nor any Out-cries for Sorrow, or Screamings for Joy, or falling down, or Swoonings and Faintings, &c. at the Preaching of the Word, or other religious Exercises; for altho' the Spirit of God no doubt may come so powerfully in Convictions, and Comforts, and Joys, upon weak Spirits as even to overcome them, and so be the accidental Cause of such Appearances sometimes; yet as it is possible, and no Ways improbable, but that such uncommon Appearances, may oftentimes arise from quite different Causes; and the Spirit of God have no Hand in them, but in a providential Way, so these can be no certain Marks or Tokens of a Man's being under the special Operations of the Spirit of God; therefore there is no Strefs at all to be laid upon such Things considered in themselves.

But the Tokens and Marks that I shall give you, of your being so led by the Spirit of God, as to be a certain Sign of your being the Children of God, shall be such as arise from the very Nature of the divine Spirit himself, as it is revealed to us in the Names, Titles, and Characters that are given of him in the holy Scriptures, and *these these*, my Brethren, you may depend upon.

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So then,

1. *I shall begin with that Character or Title given of this Spirit in our Text, where he is called the SPIRIT OF GOD.*

So that this Spirit which leads and governs every Child of God is the *Spirit of God*, the third Person in the adorable Trinity, and so is indeed God. And he is frequently stiled the Spirit of God.

And now if it be the *Spirit of God* that leads them, we may conclude that he will lead them unto God. For whether should the *Spirit of God* lead us, but unto God himself?

The *Spirit of God* must needs lead us to the Belief of his Being and Perfections, and to the Knowledge of him, and Acquaintance with him in some Measure, and to have a special Regard to him in all our Actions. If the *Spirit of God* leads us he must needs lead us to *believe that God is*, and to see and apprehend something of his Glory and Majesty, and of those glorious Excellencies and Perfections that make up the divine Essence. Moreover, The *Spirit of God* will lead us to see and consider him in the Relation he stands in to us, and to all the World, as our Creator, our Preserver, and our sovereign Lord and Ruler; and so will lead us to esteem and admire him, to worship and adore him, to love and fear him, to trust in him, and obey him, to be above all concerned for his Glory, and to place all our Happiness in him. Now

of a true Child of God. III

I say, that that Spirit which is the *Spirit of God*, whenever he leads any of us, must needs thus lead us to God.

Well then, if you would know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must see whether you are thus led to God, or no. Are you led to such Apprehensions of God, and to such Dispositions and Affections of Soul towards him, as are due to him from us? Have you a firm Belief of his Being, and have you the highest Apprehensions of his infinite Majesty, and of all his glorious Excellencies and Perfections? Do you stand in an holy Awe of him, so as to worship him with Reverence and godly Fear, and are you afraid of sinning against him? Moreover, do you love him with all your Heart and Soul, have you the highest Esteem of him, have you the most ardent Desires after him, and do you take the greatest Delight in drawing nigh to him, and in having Communion with him? Are you really concerned for his Honour and Glory, and have you a Care, and is it your Desire and Endeavour to please, honour and glorify him in all Things? And do you find your selves grieved and troubled whenever you see God dishonoured or displeased? Does Sin trouble you because it dishonours God, and offends him? And can you say that you are so concerned for the Glory of God, that there is a general and a governing Aim at it in all you do, even in the daily Concerns and common Affairs

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of Life? Do you in any Measure come up to the Apostle's Rule, that *whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you do all to the Glory of God.* Furthermore, Do you find yourselves devoted to the Service of God, and are you submissive to his Will? Do you find and feel your selves under the Influence of his divine Power and Authority, and do you find a ready Subjection to his Preceptive Will, and a quiet Submission to his providential Will? Can you heartily say as in the Lord's Prayer, *Thy Will be done?* And do you really desire to know, obey and submit to his Will in all Things? Again, Do you plainly see that he is the only satisfying Portion of the Soul? And can you truly say with the Psalmist, Psal. 119. 57. *Thou art my Portion, O Lord?* And do you plainly perceive that all your real Happiness lies in the Enjoyment of God? And do you find the Streams of Goodness that flow from him to you, enlarge your Heart towards him, and lead you nearer and nearer to the Fountain of all Good?

Now if it be thus with you, you may conclude that you are led by the *Spirit of God*, and consequently are the Children of God. For who or what would lead us to God in such a Manner as this, but the *Spirit of God* himself?

Again,

|| 1 Cor. 10. 31.

2. *This*

of a true Child of God. 113

2. *This Spirit is called the SPIRIT OF CHRIST*, consequently he will lead us to CHRIST, and to GOD thro' CHRIST.

Thus he is called in the 9th Verse of the Context, *If any Man have not the SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he is none of his.* So 1 Pet. I. II. he is called the *Spirit of Christ*. And now this divine eternal Spirit was the *Spirit of Christ*, considering Christ in his mediatorial Office, for Christ as Mediator, *received the Spirit not by Measure*, § and he dwelt in him. And it was *by the holy Ghost* that he chose his Disciples, and gave Commandments unto them. † Moreover he may be called the *Spirit of Christ*, as he procured of the Father his being sent to testify of him; to endow his Apostles, those chosen Witnesses of his, with those extraordinary and miraculous Gifts, which fitted them for preaching Christ, and publishing the Gospel to the World: And to work powerfully, graciously, and savingly upon the Souls of Men. For thus says Christ, *But when the Comforter, that is the holy Ghost is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me.* || And we read of God's sending forth the *Spirit of his Son* into the Hearts of his Children. *

And now if it be the *Spirit of Christ*, and the Spirit which *testifieth concerning Christ*, that leads

§ John 3. 34. † Acts 1. 2. || John 15. 26. * Gal. 4. 6.

and

and governs every Child of God, we may certainly conclude that *this Spirit* will lead them unto *Christ*; to the Knowledge, the saving Knowledge of *Christ*, to a sincere Belief on *him*, and to a hearty Acceptance of *him* as he is revealed and offered in the Gospel.

And this Spirit leads the Soul to *Christ* by *convincing him of Sin*, of the Evil of Sin in general, and of his own Sinfulness in particular. He opens the Man's Eyes to see what a vile Creature he is by reason of Sin. He gives him to see how that his corrupt Nature, and his sinful Life has rendred him very odious and offensive to the infinitely holy God, that he is obnoxious to divine Justice; and that he deserves nothing less than Death, Hell, and eternal Misery. He gives him to see that all the Curses of God's Law are out against him, and that he is liable every Day to be seized by divine Vengeance, and that it is of the Lord's Mercies that he is not consumed in the Flames of Hell.

Moreover, This blessed Spirit in leading the Soul to *Christ*, leads him to see that he has no Way to help and deliver himself out of this wretched State. He gives the Soul to see that he has not wherewith to atone for his Sin, or make Satisfaction to divine Justice: For the Soul that is thereby convinced of Sin, sees such an infinite Evil in Sin, and that it reflects such an infinite Dishonour upon God, that nothing he has to offer to God can be sufficient to atone therefor.

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of a true Child of God. 115

therefor. He sees that *Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the Beasts thereof sufficient for a Burnt-offering* *. Nay, he is by the Spirit made to see, that if God would accept of his sincere Repentance for his past Sins, and Amendment of Life for the future; yet that he has no Heart herofor, but that if he be left to himself, he shall, instead of repenting and reforming, be adding continually to the Score of Guilt, and *treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath*. So that he by the Spirit is led to see, that if left to himself, he has no Hope no Help; but must inevitably perish.

Moreover, The Spirit leads him to see that there is no Way to Salvation but in and thro' Jesus Christ, *that there is no Salvation in any other, nor any other Name given under Heaven among Men, whereby we can be saved, but only the Name of Jesus* †. And here the Spirit opens the Eyes of the poor convinced Soul to see Jesus *whom God hath exalted at his own right Hand to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins* †. And he sees him as one able to *save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him* ||. Accordingly this blessed Spirit persuades and enables the Soul to come to Christ, and to come to God thro' him, and to commit the whole Affair of his Salvation in-

* Isai. 40. 16. † Acts 5. 12. † Acts 5. 31. || Heb. 7. 25.

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to his Hands, heartily accepting of him in all the Offices that he sustains and executes as our Redeemer.

Now then if you would know whether you are led by the Spirit; you must see whether he thus leads you unto the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Has this Spirit thoro'ly convinced you of Sin? Have you been led to see your sinful, lost and perishing State, and the absolute Need you stand in of a Saviour? And have you seen the Fullness and all-sufficiency of Christ, and the Fitness there is in him to be a compleat Saviour to you? Have you ever seen the amiable Excellencies there are in Christ, and his amazing Love to poor perishing Sinners, in purchasing and procuring eternal Redemption for them, at the Price of his own most precious Blood and Life? Do you also see how that in this Affair of our Salvation by a Redeemer God has abounded towards us in *all Wisdom and Prudence* and do you highly approve of this Method of Salvation, which humbles Man, and exalts free Grace; and do you heartily come into it? Do you receive him heartily and unreservedly as the *Prophet, Priest and King* of your Salvation? Do you subject your self to him, as freely as you rely upon him for Salvation, nay do you see that your Salvation does very much consist in a Subjection to him? Do you shake off all Dependance upon your selves, or upon any Righteousness or Worthiness of your own, and do

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you look to him both for *Righteousness & Strength*? Do you depend entirely upon the Merits of Christ's Obedience and Death, and the Prevalency of his Intercession for Pardon and Acceptance with God? And are you willing, heartily willing, to be saved in the Way that Christ offers to be your Saviour?

Furthermore, Are you so led to Christ as to be in love with him? Do you see a Comeliness, a Beauty, and a Glory in him, so as to esteem him the Chief among ten Thousands, altogether lovely? And do you love him above Father, and Mother, and Brother, and Sister, and Wife, and Children, and Houses, and Lands; yea, and above your very Lives? Thus you must love him, or you are not worthy of him ||; and thus you will love him, if you are led by his Spirit.

Finally here, are you so led to him, as to be in some Measure conformed to him? Have you something of the same Mind in you as was in Christ Jesus? Has this blessed Spirit of Christ assimilated you, and made you like to him in the Temper of your Minds? And does it lead you to tread in his Steps, and walk as he walked in the World? Have you learned of him who was humble, and meek, and lowly in Heart? Are you diligent, and devout, are you patient, and forgiving, are you harmless and

|| Matth. 10. 37, 38.

heavenly

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heavenly as he was ? And have you any Thing of that Submissiveness to your heavenly Father's Will, and such a Concern for his Glory as there was in Christ ? And is there any Thing of that Care and diligent Endeavour to finish the Work which God has given you to do, as there was in him ?

And now if you can find such a Temper, and such a Behaviour towards the Lord Jesus Christ, you may conclude that the Spirit of Christ has so far the Leading of you, as to be a good Evidence that you are the Children of God.

Again,

3. *The Spirit by which the Children of God are led, is A SPIRIT OF TRUTH, by whose Inspiration the holy Scriptures were given : Consequently such as are led by THIS SPIRIT, will have a high Regard for them, and will make them the Rule of their Faith and Practice.*

All Scripture was given by Inspiration of God, that is of the Spirit of God : *For holy Men of God spake these Things as they were moved by the holy Ghost* *. Thus it was with the Scriptures of the old Testament, and it is the same with the Scriptures of the new Testament, for the Authors thereof had the Spirit of God with them, even the Spirit of Truth to lead them

* 2. Pet. 1. 21.

of a true Child of God. 119

into all, that is into all necessary Truths *. And the Apostle *Paul* tells us that they spake *not in Words which Men's Wisdom teacheth, but which the HOLY GHOST teacheth* †. So that the Spirit which leads every Child of God is the self same Spirit which inspired the Prophets and Apostles of old, and enabled them to deliver those sacred Oracles of Truth contained in the Bible.

And now we may be sure that all those whom this blessed Spirit leads and governs, he will lead them not only into the Belief of the Scriptures which came from himself; but into the Love of them, and into a Conformity to them.

So that if this Spirit has the Leading of any, it may be depended upon that he will lead them to receive the Word with Faith and Love, and to lay it up in their Hearts, and practice it in their Lives.

Now then if you would know whether you are led by this Spirit, you must enquire how you receive and entertain the written Word of God. Do the Scriptures appear to you to be the Oracles of God, and so the Oracles of Truth? And do the Truths thereof come with convincing Evidence? Do they come upon you *in Demonstration of the Spirit, and with Power*? Are you brought to yield a full Assent to Gospel Truths? Do you believe the History,

* John 16. 13. † 1 Cor. 2. 13.

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the Doctrines, the Promises, the Threatnings, and the Prophecies of the old and new Testament? And do the sublime mysterious Doctrines, which are plainly revealed in the Gospel, come with such Demonstration upon your Souls, as that you yield a full Assent to the Truth of them; even tho' they are above your Reason to comprehend?

Moreover, Are your Eyes so opened, as to behold the wondrous Things contained in God's Law and Gospel, and do you inwardly and heartily approve of the Gospel Scheme, and Way of Salvation? And do you desire to be saved in that Way?

Furthermore, You must enquire how the Precepts and Rules of Living laid down in the Word of God affect you. Do they strike you as the Laws of the King of Heaven, and as the Commandments of God our Saviour? Do you see the divine Authority that is instamped upon all of them? And have you a Sense of the Obligation you are under in Point of Duty, as well as Interest, to hear and observe all that God has commanded, and can you find a Heart as well as a Tongue, to say, *All that the Lord our God hath said unto us, that will we do?* And besides a Sense of the divine Authority, do you see any Excellency in the Precepts themselves? Do you see into the Reasonableness and Necessity of the divine Commandment in his Word? Can you say, that you esteem all God's Precepts concerning

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concerning all Things to be right? Does the Law appear to be *holy*, and the Commandment *holy*, and *just*, and *good*? And do you adhere closely to the Word of God, as the only sure Rule of your Faith and Practice? And do you reject every Thing in Religion that is not according to this Word? And do you hide this Word in your Heart that you may not sin against God?

Furthermore, Is the Word of God your Delight, as well as your Counsellor? Do you Delight in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law do you meditate Day and Night? Are you able to say that the Law of God's Mouth is better to you than Thousands of Gold and Silver, and are his Statutes your Songs in the House of your Pilgrimage, and is his Word sweeter to you than Honey, or the Honey Comb?

But then can you also say with the Psalmist, 119. 140. *Thy Word is VERY PURE, therefore thy Servant loveth it?* Here consider I beseech you very particularly, whether it be the Purity of God's Word that in an especial Manner recommends it to your Choice, your Love, and Delight. Do you love the Word of God because its Doctrines are *pure*, and its Precepts *holy*, and because they tend to instruct you in the Nature of *Holiness*, and also to make you *holy*.

And now if it be thus with you, you may conclude that you are led by this blessed Spirit,

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and are the Children of God ; for the Spirit of God is uniform in his Operations. And since he indited the holy Scriptures, giving us the Doctrines and Precepts thereof ; we may conclude, that such as he takes the Leading of, he will lead them into the Faith, the Love, and Practice of the Things contained therein.

4. *Again the Spirit by which the Children of God are led, is a SPIRIT OF HOLINESS ; consequently, such as are so led by the holy Spirit, as to demonstrate them the Children of God, they will be led to HOLINESS.*

He is called the *Spirit of Holiness*. * And in a Multitude of Places he is called the *Holy Spirit*, or the *HOLY GHOST*. And now we may conclude, that all the Operations of this Spirit will be *HOLY*, and that if ever he leads us, he will lead us from Sin to *Holiness*: That if ever he gives a Turn to us, and works a Change in us, it must needs be from a Life of Sin to a Life of *Holiness*. And that if ever this Spirit work powerfully and effectually upon the Soul, it will thoro'ly convince of Sin, and beget a real Grief and Sorrow for Sin, and an Hatred of every Thing that appears sinful, & a Love to, & a Delight in, & the Practice of every Thing that appears truly *good and holy*.

Here then if you would know whether you are under the Influence of such an *holy Spirit*,

* Rom. I. 4.

of a true Child of God. 123

you must consider what Operation this Spirit has had upon you with Respect to *Sin* and *Holiness*. You must enquire whether this Spirit has ever so opened your Eyes as to discover to you the Deformity, the Baseness, and the Vileness of Sin, considered as it is in itself a Transgression of the holy and righteous Law of God; and has he at the same Time given you to see the Nature, Charms, and Beauty of Holiness? Do you find your Tho'ts and Apprehensions, your Inclinations and Dispositions as to those Things changed? Do those Things that appear sinful, appear odious and hateful to you? And can you say that those Sins which you have been in Love with, and have hugg'd them in your Bosom, and have roll'd them as a sweet Morfel under your Tongue, that now you hate and abhor them, and that you loath yourselves upon the Account of them? And do you renounce and abandon them, saying with *Ephraim*, *What have I to do any more with Idols?* † And have you been so under the Influence of this holy Spirit, as actually to part with your beloved Sins? Are those Sins which have been as dear as a right Eye, plucked out? and those that have been as near as a right Hand, cut off?

And as you thus hate Sin, so on the other Hand, you must inquire what Love there is to Holiness.

† Hosea 14. 8.

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And here, you must enquire upon what Account you love Holiness ; and must see whether you love it upon God's Account, because it is the Nature of God to be holy, and because he wills Holiness and delights in Holiness ; and surely if the Spirit of God leads you to any Love of Holiness, it will be upon this Account, that God is holy, and requires it of you. But then you must further enquire whether you see the real Beauty and Excellency of Holiness, and whether you esteem and love it also for its own sake. You must examine whether Things appear amiable and lovely to you according to the Degree of Holiness that is in them : Do you love God above all, because he is glorious in Holiness ? Do you esteem him, and love him, and delight in him for his Holiness, as you do for his Goodness ? Is Heaven peculiarly desirable, because it is a holy Place, and the Habitation of God's Holiness and Glory ? Nay does the Happiness of Heaven appear to you to consist in its Holiness ? Furthermore, do you delight in *holy* Meditations, in *holy* Company, and in *holy* Conversation ? Lastly, Is it the great Desire of your Soul to be made *holy*, and do you earnestly endeavour to lead an holy Life, and are you in the Way of Watchfulness and Prayer, and in the diligent Use of Means, *cleansing your selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God ?*

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Now unless you can, upon a critical and impartial Examination of your selves, find that it is thus with you in some good Measure, you have no Reason to conclude that you are led by such an *holy* Spirit, and have not this Mark of being the Children of God, nor any Ground to hope for the Inheritance of Children whilst in such a State ; for *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* * Whereas, if the holy Spirit has but so much the leading and governing of us, as to renew and sanctify us ; and if we are enabled clearly and certainly to see this, we may depend upon it that we are the Children of God, and shall partake of the Inheritance of all such. *Ye have your Fruit unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life.* †

5. *This Spirit is a Spirit of GRACE and SUPPLICATION, consequently such as are led by this Spirit will be put upon the great Duty of Prayer, and will take Delight in it.*

God promised by the Prophet *Zechary*, 12. 10. that he would pour out upon the House of *David*, and upon the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, the *Spirit of Grace and Supplication*. And now the holy Spirit of God is such a Spirit ; for it is worthy our Observation, that whenever the holy Ghost is called the *Comforter*, as he is in many Places of Scripture, ‡ he may as well

* Heb. 12. 14. † Rom. 6. 22. ‡ John 14. 16. and 26. 16, 17.

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be called the *Advocate* or *Paraclete*, as the Word is, even one that espouses and undertakes our Cause, that pleads with us and for us, and puts us upon pleading for ourselves.

As for the Lord Jesus Christ, he is our *Advocate* with the Father ; If any Man sin we have an *Advocate*, or *Paraclete*, with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. * The same Word is used as when the holy Ghost is called the *Comforter*. † So that every true Child of God has not only an Advocate in heaven with the Father, but has an Advocate, or Paraclete, with, or within himself, even the holy Ghost, which God the Father (thro' the Merits and Intercession of his Son) has sent to perform the Office of an Advocate, to plead and strive with us, to stir up Convictions in our Souls, of our Sin and Danger; and to perswade and enable us to an hearty Acceptance of Jesus Christ, and of Salvation by him : And to put us upon desiring, seeking, and praying to God for our selves and others, for all needed Mercy and Grace.

So that one great Office of the holy Ghost is, to plead with Men, and to put them upon pleading with God for themselves and others, and to assist them in the great Duty of Prayer, stirring up sincere Desires and devout Affections, and enabling us to pour out our Souls to God in Prayer ; and this we are taught in the 26th

* 1 John 2. 1. † παράκλητος

of a true Child of God. 127

Verse of the Context, where the Apostle says, *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities: For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us with Groanings that cannot be uttered.*

And now from hence we may certainly gather, that whenever a Man is led by the Spirit of God, so as to be a Mark that he is a Child of God, he will be put upon the Exercise of Prayer, he will see the Reasonableness, the Agreeableness, the Usefulness, and the Necessity of Prayer, and will be led not only into the diligent and constant Practice of Prayer, praying always with all Prayer and Supplication, and continuing therein; but this Spirit will excite an Earnestness and Fervency of Devotion, and will cause a Pleasure in drawing near to God in this holy Duty.

For how can it be supposed that this *Paraclete*, this *Advocate*, should have the leading and governing of any Persons without putting them upon being Advocates and Intercessors with God for themselves and others?

Now then, if any of you would know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must see whether he has led and brought you to your Prayers, to frequent, constant, humble, fervent Prayer. Do you see your absolute Dependence upon God for every Thing? Do you see the Reasonableness of Prayer? Do you see the great Privilege of Prayer, and the infinite Condescension

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scention and Grace of God, that he permits and allows us to draw near to him, and that we may come with Boldness to the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy and find Grace to help in Time of Need? And do you thankfully improve this Priviledge, this Liberty of Access, so as in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving to make known your Requests to God?

And do you come humbly before God, sensible of your Wants, and at the same Time sensible of your Unworthiness of the least Mercy?

Moreover, If you would judge whether you are led by the Spirit of Prayer, you must consider, whether you content yourselves with a dull, lifeless Form of Prayer Morning and Evening; or whether there be some hearty Desires, and whether your Soul is poured out in Prayer, which is indeed what God looks upon as Prayer?

Enquire here further still, and see whether you love Prayer, whether you delight in drawing near to God, and take Pleasure in spreading your Cases before God, and pleading with him for Mercy and Grace. Are you thankful for this Liberty of Access to God, and do you go to him with your Prayers and your Praises as your Delight and Pleasure, rather than as your Task and Burden? And enquire particularly here, whether it is sufficient for you that you have Leave and Liberty to go to God by Prayer

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Prayer in your Closets and in your Families, without insisting upon a direct and positive Command for it ? For he that has the true Spirit of Prayer wants nothing but Liberty to go to God with all his Wants, and to be frequent at the Throne of Grace.

And therefore such as cast off Fear and restrain Prayer before God, or take no Pleasure in Prayer, and are rather glad of an Excuse to omit the Duty, rather than of an Opportunity to renew their Addresses to God, how dwelleth the Spirit of Prayer in such a Man ? After the Apostle *Paul* was converted it is said, *Behold he prayeth* *. And therefore such as don't give themselves unto Prayer, and take no Delight in that Duty ; it is a sad Sign that they are not the Children of God. A prayerless Person is doubtless a graceless one.

6. *This Spirit by which the Sons of God are led is A SPIRIT OF ADOPTION, and consequently every one that is led by this Spirit, has a child-like Temper and Disposition of Soul towards God wrought in him.*

Thus we read in the Verse immediately following my Text. But ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to Fear, but the Spirit of ADOPTION, whereby we cry, *Abba Father.*

* Acts 9. 11.

Now

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Now he is called the Spirit of Adoption, because he works in us the Temper and Disposition of Children towards our heavenly Father; enabling us to call him Father, and putting us upon going to him with the Reverence and Confidence of Children to a Father, able and ready to help us; for so says the Apostle, Gal. 4. 6, 7. *Because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son.*

Now then if you would know whether you are led by this Spirit, you must examine and see, whether there be any of this child-like Temper wrought in you. Do you look upon God as your Friend and Father? And can you find any Thing of the Honour, the Fear, the Love, the Reverence for him that is infinitely due to such a Father? Do you go to him with the Freedom, with the Delight, and with the Confidence of Children to a Father? Do you depend upon him for your daily Bread, both for your Souls and Bodies, as Children do upon their Parents? Are you concerned for the Honour of your heavenly Father, as loving, dutiful Children are for the Honour of their earthly Parents? Does it grieve you to see him dishonoured and offended, and his Name profaned and blasphemed; and do you inwardly resent it, as much as a dutiful Child would when he should hear his Father slandered and abused?

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abused? Do you look upon his Interest and Honour your own, as a Child does that of his Father?

Furthermore, Do you find any Thing of a dutiful and submissive Temper towards your heavenly Father? Can you with Sincerity and from your Heart say what our Lord has taught you to pray, *Our Father, thy Will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven?* Have you such a Regard to him as standing in the Relation of a Father, as puts you upon keeping all his Commandments, and can you say that none of his Commands are grievous to you, but that your delight to do his Will? And do you as quietly submit to his wise and fatherly Corrections? And can you say in any Measure with the Lord Jesus Christ at the Approach of Trouble and Sorrow, *Father, not as I will; but as thou wilt* *.

Again, Do you trust in, and can you so depend upon your heavenly Father's Wisdom and Care and covenant Love and Faithfulness, as to rest satisfied with all his Dispensations, and do you actually find the happy Fruit of all his dealings with you? Do they work for your Good, your spiritual Good, as they do to all them that love God?

Finally, Do you see any Likeness or Resemblance of your heavenly Father in you, as

* Mark 14. 36.

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there is commonly between earthly Parents and their Children? Do you find any Likeness to God in the moral Perfections of his Nature? Is the Image of God which was lost by the Fall of our first Parents, in any Measure restored? Have you learned to be righteous as God is righteous, to be *holy as God is holy*, to be *merciful as God is merciful*, and *perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*? Now if it be thus with you, it will be certain that God has indeed sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts.

7. *The Spirit of God is a powerful and active Spirit, and productive of all good Fruits; consequently when any are led by the Spirit of God,*
THERE WILL BE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.

But I have no Time to enter upon the particular Consideration of these, at present, but shall leave them to be considered hereafter, when God shall give the Opportunity.

And all I shall add at present is my Advice, that when you go home you would examine your selves closely and critically, by these Marks, to see whether you have been and are thus led, guided and governed by this blessed Spirit. Put the several Questions as you can remember them, close to your own Hearts, and see what Answer you can make to them. And here you had need to be very careful that you don't give false and flattering Answers to your selves.

of a true Child of God. 133

and so deceive your own Souls. By what you have already heard you find, that there is a great deal contained in being led by the Spirit of God; and there is a great deal more to be said yet. It is not such an easy Thing to judge whether we are led by the Spirit of God, as some think for. Because altho' in some Things they may seem to be led by the Spirit of God, but in others there are sad Demonstrations yet that they are not. Now you must by no Means sit down satisfied in such a State as this. You must never think you are led truly to God, unless you are led to Christ, and to God thro' Christ; and you must never think you are led to Christ, unless you are led in the Way of Truth as revealed in the Word of God, and unless you are led to Holiness of Heart, and Holiness of Life, and unless you are brought into a truly prayerful and thankful Frame of Soul, and have the true Spirit of Adoption, whereby you can with Faith and Affection call God Father, and go to him as Children to a Father, and besides all this unless there be the Fruits of the Spirit in all social Graces and Virtues relating to our fellow Creatures, you cannot with safety determine that you are the Children of God: And this teaches us not to be hasty and sudden in drawing up Conclusions in our own Favour. The Leadings of the Spirit comprehend a great deal in them. And there requires a large and comprehensive View

134 *Clear and sure Marks, &c.*

of our selves, to judge rightly of our State. Well then, be much in the Examination and Observation of your selves, as ever you would find out what Spirit you are of, or what Spirit has the Leading and Government of you. And even in this Examination and Trial of your selves, you need this blessed Spirit to lead and guide you. And for want of this Spirit of Truth to guide them, many have been so diabolically deluded that they have thought they have been in an extraordinary Manner led by the Spirit of God, when they have been actually ruled by the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience.



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7. *The Spirit of God is a powerful and active Spirit, productive of all good Fruits; consequently when any are led by the Spirit of God, there will be THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.*

THE Spirit of God is an almighty Spirit, and wherever he comes to Purpose, he produces most powerful and happy Effects. He gives a universal Change to Men's Tempers and Principles, and gives them a new Turn of Tho't, of Disposition, and Conduct, both towards God, their Neighbour, and themselves.

And there will be not only some, but all the Fruits of the Spirit bro't forth by them; altho' some will be more manifest and conspicuous than others. Now all christian Vertues and

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Graces are truly the Fruits of the Spirit ; whether they relate to God or Man, because they are all produced by the Agency and Influence of the blessed Spirit. Now we read, Eph. 5. 9. *That the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth.* But we have a larger Catalogue of these blessed Fruits of the Spirit, in Gal. 5. 22. 23. Where we are told, that the *Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.* Now some of these Fruits of the Spirit here reckon'd up, considered in the largest and most comprehensive Sense, will take in many Duties to God, as well as to our Neighbour. And it is most certain, that the Spirit of God produces all those gracious Habits in the Soul towards God, as well as those towards one another. And they are as truly and properly the Fruits of the Spirit.

But as those Tokens and Marks of our being led by the Spirit of God, which I have mentioned in the former Discourse, had a more immediate Reference to God and Christ ; so I shall consider those Fruits of the Spirit here reckoned up by the Apostle, more especially with Respect to ourselves, and one another.

And these Fruits of the Spirit are as certain Tokens of our being led by the Spirit of God as the other, and where these social Graces and Vertues are wanting, it is as certain a Sign that we are without the Spirit of God, as when those

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Spirit, & Marks of Adoption. 137

those Graces are wanting, that do more immediately refer to God himself. And indeed we may lay this down as a Rule, that if we have not these Graces that relate to Men, we may be sure that we have none of those which relate to God. The first and great Commandment is indeed to *love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, &c.* but the second, which is like unto it, is to *love our Neighbour as our selves; and on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* * And God has so joined these two Commandments together, that no Man may put them asunder. *This is the Commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.* † And therefore such only deceive themselves, who think they love God, and yet dont love their Brother, and are not ready with their Acts of Love and Kindness towards him. *If a Man say I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he bath not seen?* †

Here then I will distinctly consider those several Fruits of the Spirit, which the Apostle reckons up, as Marks and Signs that we must find in us, before we may upon good Grounds conclude that we are led by the Spirit of God,

* Matth. 22. 37,-----40. † I John 4.
21. † I John 4. 20.

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so as to demonstrate that we are the Children of God. And I shall take them in Order.

1. The first Fruit of the Spirit here mentioned, is LOVE. So whenever any are led by the Spirit of God, there will be not only a supream Love to God; *but a sincere, undissembled, true Love to one another.*

The Fruit of the Spirit is Love: And here I shall not speak of the Love of God, and the Love of Christ, (which are indeed Fruits of the Spirit) because I have spoken to these in the foregoing Discourse: But more especially of the Love of our Neighbour. This Spirit of God is a Spirit of Love, as well as of Truth, and he begets Love in every Soul wherever he comes to any saving Purpose. This Spirit subdues, and in a great Measure removes that Envy, Hatred, and Malice which is natural to us since the Fall, and excites a sincere and fervent Charity, a free generous Love towards all Mankind, enabling such as are under the gracious powerful Influences hereof, to love their Neighbour as themselves. The Apostle speaking of himself and others, says, *That in Times past, they lived in Malice and Envy, were hateful, and hating one another.* † But now wherever the Spirit of God comes, so as to lead and govern the Soul, he subdues those wicked and unrea-

† Titus 3. 3.

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sonable Lusts : For so the Apostle goes on, *But* after that the Kindness and Love of God our Saviour towards Men appeared, not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to his Mercy *he saved us, by the Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the holy Ghost.* So that whenever Persons are regenerated, or renewed by the holy Ghost, their Malice and Hatred will be subdued, and a universal Benevolence and Good-Will arise in their Souls. You may remember I told you in the last Discourse, that the *Spirit of God* would certainly lead us *to God*, not only to the Love of him, but a Likeness to him, and consequently must needs beget brotherly Love in the Soul. *Beloved, let us love one another, for Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for GOD IS LOVE.* †

Well then, if you would know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must see whether there be *this blessed Fruit of the Spirit* in you, even a *true and undissembled Love to Mankind.* Have you seen that there is in you naturally, Malice and Hatred to your Fellow-Creatures ? And do you find that it is in any Measure subdued and removed ? Can you say that you heartily wish well to the whole humane Race ? And do you with Sincerity pray for them, and from your Heart desire their Salva-

† 1 John 4. 7, 8.

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tion and Happiness? Or when you pray for them, are you very indifferent about the Matter, and unconcerned how it fares with them? Now this it is to be feared is the Case of many, they pray for all Men, but alas, they are only Words of Form, without any real Desire about the Matter.

But then as Love to all Mankind is a Fruit of the the Spirit, so a special and peculiar Love to the Children of God, and the Household of Faith, is wro't in the Soul by this Spirit; for the Spirit of God will lead every one that is under his Influence, to love the Children of God in an especial Manner.

Here then you should examine your selves, whether you find a special and peculiar Love going forth towards all that you apprehend to be the true Children of God: If you have had no Acquaintance with them, and received no Benefit from them, nay if you have never seen them; yet does the Repute of their being the Children of God, and Servants of Jesus Christ draw forth your Heart in Esteem of them, and Love to them? And can you say that you love such better than you do your Friends and Relatives, and such as are very kind and generous to you, whom you have Reason to fear are not the Children of God? But here you must enquire what you love those for, above others. Can you find that your special and peculiar Love to them is, because they love God, and

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because they are the Friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, and because they appear with the Image and Likeness of God upon them? Now if these Things be the real Incentives of your Love, it is a Sign that you are quickened and governed by the divine Spirit. *We know that we are passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.* ||

But then again, where this Spirit of Love rules and reigns, he will lead us not only to love the Friends of God, and to love our own Friends and Benefactors; but he will put us also upon *loving our very Enemies*. You must remember it is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ who manifested infinite Love to your very Enemies. *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins ** And thus God commended his Love towards us, in that while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us †. In this Case then, which is indeed a trying Point, let us carefully examine our selves. Are you brought to this, to lay aside all malicious Tho'ts, all revengeful Desires, towards those that have injured or abused you, in your Name, in your Estate, or in your Family? And instead thereof, are you ready to reward Good for Evil? Can you, and do you, from your Hearts *bless*

|| 1 John 3. 14.

* 1 John 4. 10.

† Rom. 5. 8.

them

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them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you ? I ask you whether you do these Things from your Hearts. For if ye from *your Hearts* forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you †. It is to be feared that many who say they forgive their offending Brother, yet have their Hearts full of Malice and Revenge, and their Mouths full of Curses and Ill-Wishes against him, and in some secret under-hand Way, doing many a Mischiefe to him. But now if we are led by the Spirit of God and Christ, and there is the true genuine Fruit of this Spirit, we shall from our Hearts forgive them, and from our Hearts pray God to forgive them, and shall be ready, as Opportunity presents, to do good unto them. And this will be to show our selves to be *the Children of our Father which is in Heaven, who causeth his Sun to shine on the Evil and on the Good ; and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust* ||. And who daily loadeth us with Mercies, even while we are loading him with our Iniquities.

2. *Another Fruit of the Spirit here mentioned is Joy.*

† Matth. 6. 14. and Chap. 18. Verse 35.

|| Matth. 5. 45.

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And now, altho' *Joy in the Lord*, is the-Fruit of the Spirit, and what we should particularly examine our selves about, to see whether we do really joy in the Lord, and rejoice greatly in the God of our Salvation, whether we rejoice in Christ Jesus, and at the Advancement of his Cause and Interest, and whether the Meditation upon God, and Christ, and spiritual Things be sweet unto us, and whether there be a greater Delight in God's Service, and in enjoying Communion with him than in any worldly Service, or carnal Enjoyment whatsoever, and whether we find the Joy of the Lord to be our Strength ; I say, altho' we should examine our selves in these Things ; yet I would consider this *Joy* with Respect to our *fellow Creatures* in a particular Manner, even our rejoicing heartily at the Good and Welfare of others, and our doing with Delight and Pleasure what will promote their Happiness and Comfort. This *Joy* is a Branch of that grand comprehensive Command of *loving our Neighbour as our selves*, and flows from such a Principle of Love reigning in the Soul. So that where there is that *Joy* which is the Fruit of the Spirit, there will be not only an external, but an inward hearty Rejoicing at the Good of others, at their spiritual Good in an especial Manner.

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This Joy which is the Fruit of the Spirit is the direct Contrary to that Envyng and Grieving at the Good of our Neighbours, which is so natural to us in our corrupt Estate. It is that Part of Charity which *rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth.* *

Moreover this Joy intends our doing Acts of Kindness with *Joyfulness*, that if we give to the Relief of any, we do it chearfully, and not grudgingly or of Necessity, remembring that God gives freely, and loves the chearful Giver. It intends that we do so truly and heartily love Mankind, that it is a Joy and Pleasure to us to be doing that which will afford Comfort and Joy to others.

And now this Joy which is the Fruit of the Spirit, is not confin'd to particular Friends and Neighbours, and dear Relations, but it must reach to all that we are concerned with, and that come within the Reach of our Kindness; even altho' they have injured and abused us.

So then, would you know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must enquire after this Fruit of the Spirit. Do you find any Thing of an habitual Joy at the Good of others?

* 1 Cor. 13. 6.

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Do you find any Thing of a secret but real Pleasure at the Prosperity of others? Or do you rather find a Spirit which lusteth to Envy working in you? Can you rejoice with them that rejoice, even altho' you yourselves are in Trouble? Can you be truly thankful for other Persons Mercies as well as for your own? And can you be thankful for Mercies which they receive when you are denied those particular Mercies your selves? Are you thankful that your Neighbour is in Health, altho' you are in Sick-ness? Are you pleased with every Thing good and excellent which you see in others? Can you rejoice in the Gifts and Graces of others, even when they excel you, and bear away a great Share of Honour and Esteem from you? And do you rejoice at the Repentance and Conversion of a Sinner in any Measure as the Angels do in Heaven; and when they bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, and abound in the Fruits of Righteousness and Holiness, is this the Rejoicing of your Heart? And do you delight in doing Good to others, both to their Souls and to their Bodies? When you give, do you give with open Hand and Heart? And when you do Acts of Kindness, do you do them not only as a Duty you must do, but as a reasonable and pleasant Duty, and what you delight to do? This would be the genuine Fruit of the Spirit.

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3. *Another Fruit of the Spirit is PEACE.*

And if we should consider this, with Respect to *Peace* with God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, and *Peace* with Conscience, and undoubtedly it is the Fruit of the Spirit.

But I will consider it at present only as *Peace* among Men. And therefore such as are led by this Spirit, will be led into a peaceable Temper and Behaviour.

The Spirit of God, wherever it leads and governs, will suppress a contentious and quarrelsome Spirit: For it will subdue Pride, and *those other Lusts from whence come Wars and Fightings*, * and lesser Contentions. And it puts Men upon *studying the Things that make for Peace*; yea and upon *following Peace with all Men*, as well as *Holiness*, without which no Man shall see the Lord. †

So then, would you know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must see whether there be a peaceable Spirit within you, leading and governing you in all your Concerns one with another. Do you dread Contentions and Divisions? Do you carefully watch against every Thing that stirs up Strife? Are you careful to avoid those Things that are provoking to others? And are you ready to pass by Affronts

* James 4. 1.

† Heb. 12. 14.

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and Provocations which are offered to yourselves, rather than prosecute them into a Quarrel? Do you watch and guard against the Beginnings of Strife, do you as the wise Man advises unto, *leave off Contention before it be meddled with.* † And when any unhappy Differences are begun, are you desirous to put a speedy Issue to them? Are you ready to accommodate Differences that you have fallen into? And is there a yielding, condescending, complying Temper in you, ready to forgive Injuries, and ready to acknowledge your Faults, and ask Forgiveness wherein you have offended and injured others?

Furthermore, with Respect to others that are in Contention, are you *Peace-Makers* among them, such as our Saviour pronounces *blessed*, and whom he says *shall be called the Children of God*? † Are you *Counsellors of Peace*? And are you careful to do what in you lies to extinguish every Fire of Contention so soon as you perceive it begins to burn? And are you careful to avoid every Thing that has a Tendency to break the Peace of others, or that will carry on a Contention when begun among them? And here in particular, are you careful to avoid all *Tale-bearing* in such Cases, remembering what the wise Man says, *Where no Wood is the*

† Prov. 17. 14. † Matth. 5. 9.

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*Fire goeth out ; so where there is no TALE-BEARER the Strife ceaseth. The Words of a TALE-BEARER are as Wounds, and they go down into the innermost Parts of the Belly **. Now this is a good Rule among others to judge whether we have the Spirit of God to lead and govern us, for God is a God of Love and Peace : And Christ is the Prince of Peace, and came on purpose to make Peace thro' the Blood of his Cross : And therefore when Men are litigious & quarrelsome, & live in Contentions, they may justly fear whether they are led by the Spirit of God. And would to God that Brethren and Neighbours who live at Variance, and in Contention and Strife all their Days, would seriously consider of this.

4. *Another Fruit of the Spirit is LONG-SUFFERING.*

By which we may understand a restraining our Anger under Provocations ; our bearing patiently any Injuries and Affronts that are offered unto us, instead of hastily proceeding to resent or revenge them. Now Patience, or Long-suffering, is a Perfection of God, for so his Name is proclaimed, *The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, LONG-SUFFERING †*. And so it must needs be a Perfection

* Prov. 26. 20, 22. † Exodus 34. 6.

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in the Spirit of God, what belongs to his Nature, and which he will work in every one that is brought under his divine Guidance and Influence. He will so work upon, and in, all whom he leads that they shall be *Long-suffering*, and *patient in Spirit* : They shall bear Injuries and Affronts, so as to *defer their Anger*, and not break out into rash Wishes or revengeful Actions.

Indeed it must be allowed that there is a great Difference in Men's natural Tempers, even among those that we look upon to be the Children of God : Some Men are naturally much more hasty in Spirit than others, and it is with much more Difficulty that they restrain their Anger, than some others. Their Spirits are naturally so volatile, and so easily put into Agitation, that they break forth oftentimes into angry Actions or Expressions, even before the Man has Time to think of it, so as to restrain his Passion : But yet if Men subject to such sudden and violent Passions are under the governing and restraining Influences of the divine Spirit, they will have their Passions under better Command, so as to keep in from such sudden, violent Out-breakings of rash Anger, which others that are under no Restraint do fall into. Whenever the holy Spirit comes to purpose he sanctifies Men's particular Tempers, and even their angry Passions, making use of them to
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very good Purposes, turning them into a flaming Zeal for the Cause of God, and the Interest of Religion, as he did the warm Temper of *Elijah*. So he causes the hasty Spirit and angry Passions of Men to praise him, and the Remainder thereof he will restrain.

So then if you would judge whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must see what Government you have of your selves, and of your Spirits. If you would know whether the Spirit of God rules in your Hearts, you must know whether he has given you the Rule of your own Spirit, which is a glorious Attainment ; for *he that ruleth his own Spirit is greater than he that taketh a City* †. Here then let me ask you, Are you enabled in any Measure to keep under your Passions ? Do you avoid rash Anger, and the being angry without a Cause ? Have you learned to bear Provocations patiently, so as not to have your Spirits ruffled, nor your Passions breaking out in an indecent unchristian Manner ? Have you learnt of your blessed Lord to endure the Contradiction of Sinners ? Can you bear their Reproaches and their Insults, and do you imitate that perfect Pattern, who *when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously* || ? And can you say with the A-

† Prov. 16. 32.

|| 1 Pet. 2. 23.

postles

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postles, being reviled, we bless : Being persecuted, we suffer it : Being defamed, we entreat * ? Can it be said of you, that you are slow to Wrath, and that instead of repelling Anger with Anger, you endeavour with soft Answers to turn away Wrath ?

In a Word here, Are you jealous over your Spirits, and watchful over them, and whenever you find your Passions to rise, do you with all your Might endeavour to suppress them ? Do you at such a Time keep your Tongue as with a Bridle, that you might not offend therewith ?

Furthermore, Do you find that you gain upon your Passions, and that you get more and more the Mastery of them ? Are they less turbulent, and not so unruly as they have been ? For wherever the Spirit of God comes and prevails, the Soul is restored, the usurping Passions are turned off the Throne, and Reason and Conscience restored to their Dominion and Government. And therefore such Men as give Way to an angry Spirit, and suffer themselves to be carried away with their Passions, and are continually in a Ruffle of Mind, venting their Wrath upon one and another, whether they have any just Provocation or no ; how dwelleth the Love of God, and the Spirit of God in such ?

* 1 Cor. 4. 12, 13.

5. Another

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5. *Another Fruit of the Spirit here mentioned by the Apostle, is GENTLENESS.*

Now by *Gentleness* we may understand that Sweetness and Kindness of Temper, by which we are disposed to deal gently and kindly with all that we have any Concern with, and a Disposition to accommodate our selves to each other (so far as we may) and to make Things easy and comfortable for others, as well as to be easy and quiet our selves.

This *Gentleness* may be considered as opposite to every Thing that is rigorous and severe, unmerciful or cruel; yea, and opposite to a stiff, perverse, and obstinate Temper.

This *Gentleness*, which is the Fruit of the Spirit, is a sweet, soft, pleasant, obliging Temper, sanctified by the Spirit, whereby the Man has an inward Inclination, and a gracious Propension to treat every Man in a gentle kind, and tender Manner.

This *Gentleness* contains in it a Disposition to think favourably of others, and to put as can did and as charitable Constructions upon their Sayings & Doings as they will possibly bear; and also a Disposition to speak to and of Persons in a kind and gentle Manner, avoiding every Thing in Conversation that is harsh, that is rude, that is morose or uncivil.

This *Gentleness* don't consist in soothing and flattering Persons, commending them beyond their

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their Deserts; nor does it hinder from administering faithful and sharp Reproofs where they are needed. But yet the Gentle-Man will treat every Man with due Respect, and will be so friendly, so yielding, and condescending, so obliging, and ready to do a Kindness, as softens and wins the Hearts of others.

And now this *Gentleness*, the Fruit of the Spirit, flows from a holy Generosity of Soul, full of Love, and Good-Will to Men, and full of Gratitude to God.

Now then if you would know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must inquire whether you have such a kind, gentle and good Spirit within you. Do you lay aside or check every Thing that is morose, churlish, cross and fretful in your Tempers? Do you endeavour to make your selves easy and comfortable to all that you are concerned with, whether in private or publick Stations, whether at Home or Abroad? Are you as becometh the Servants of the Lord, *gentle* in your Carriage towards all, instead of striving with any? Have you obtained any of that Wisdom from above, that is *pure, peaceable, GENTLE, and easy to be entreated, and full of Mercy* *? Do you find your selves *kindly affectionate one to another in*

* James 3. 17.

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brotherly Love ? Do you delight in pleasing others, rather than to be thwarting and vexing them, and do you endeavour to please them in all Things for their Good ? And are you careful to consider the various Tempers of Men, and are you ready to yield and condescend to them, and comply with them, so far as may be done with a good Conscience, and consistent with their real Good ? Now if there be such a Sweetness, Gentleness, and Agreeableness of Temper, excited by the Spirit of God, it will not only render you the Delight of humane Kind, but give you a good Token that God delights in you as his Children.

6. *Another Fruit of the Spirit, is GOODNESS.*

And now if we understand this, as distinct from the foregoing Fruit of the Spirit, I would consider it as intending not only the Principle of Love, Kindness, and Good-Will to Men, but the *Practice* of it. By this Goodness I would understand not only our being good, but our *doing good*. It intends not only a Disposition and Desire, but our actual Care and Endeavour to be as useful and as serviceable in the World as we can, and to have our Time, our Strength, our Powers, and Faculties, our Estate, our Authority, and our Influence, all employed after

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such a Manner as may be not only for our own Good, but for the Good and Benefit of others. Where the Spirit of God works this Goodness, the Man will desire and endeavour to do all the Good he can, according to the Capacity that God has given him, and the Station that God has placed him in. I say according to his Capacity and Station, because he will be sensible, that if he attempts above his Capacity, and out of his Rank and Station, he will be in Danger of doing more Hurt than Good. I say therefore that within his own Sphere he will endeavour to do all the Good he can. Accordingly such a Man as is endowed with this Spirit of true Goodness, will consider what Abilities God has given him, and will take Heed that he don't boast of any false Gift, or imagine himself fit for what he is not; nor on the other Hand, will he deny any of God's Gifts, or excuse himself from any Service that would be for the Good of others, from a false Pretence that he has not Ability for it. But he will think soberly of his Abilities and Capacities of doing Good, and will consider the Station that God in his Providence has placed him in; and so what Opportunities he has in his Hand for getting and doing Good, and will readily and cheerfully embrace the same. Is he a civil Ruler, and in any Place of Power and Trust, if he has this Spirit of Goodness, he will rule in the Fear of God, and endeavour according

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to the Design of his Office, to *be the Minister of God for Good* to the People. Is he a Minister of the Gospel ; he will endeavour to do all the Good he can in this Station, and that he may do this Good especially, which is the greatest of all, even to convert Sinners from the Error of their Ways, and save their Souls from Death : Or if he be only in private Station, he will be content with that, to be concerned to do all the Good he can therein, by his Estate, by his Counsels, by his Example and by his Prayers.

And now if you would know whether you are led by this Spirit of Goodness, you must enquire whether you are thus inclined to Acts of Goodness, and whether you live in the daily Practice of it, in Conformity to God himself, who is not only Good, but does Good. Do you look upon your selves as made to do all the Good you can, and that all which you have and are, is given and continued to you to do Good withal ? And are you pleased with the Thoughts of having such and such Abilities and Opportunities for doing Good ? Here let me ask you, whether your being in any superior publick Station pleases you, *chiefly* upon the Account, namely, that it gives you an Opportunity of being more extensively good to others or is the Honour of it, and the Opportunity of serving your selves, that which most secretly affects you ? So again, if God gives Wealth

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and Plenty of this World's Goods to you, what Thought is it pleases you most? Is it that now you shall have the Name of a rich Man, and that now you have wherewith to gratify your Covetousness, and inordinate Love of the World, and that you have Plenty wherewith to gratify your Pride, your Luxury, and Vanity? Or does this please you most, to think that now you are enabled to do Good to others, that now you have wherewith to relieve such as are in Straits, to supply the Wants of the Needy, to support the Gospel at home, & to spread it abroad? This I know is oftentimes the Language of Persons before they arrive to any plentiful Estate. And Oh what fine generous Projections are made by Persons provided they had but an Estate in their Hands! Now therefore if Persons would know whether they are sincere in this, they must enquire whether they are now actually doing Good according to their present Ability: Do you now actually lay by, as God prospers you, for pious and charitable Uses? And are you doing Good according to your Ability as you go along? You that are rich, are you rich in good Works? And are the rest of you, according to your Ability, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate for the publick Good? Let me ask you, whether you choose rather to give to others that are in Wants, than to lay up for a Hoard, or lay out for Superfluities for your selves? And are you concerned to deny

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your selves some Conveniencies, that you might relieve others, under their Necessities ? And is it more Pleasure to you to do that whereby others might have necessary Food, than to fare sumptuously your selves ? And had you rather cloath the Naked, than dress fine your selves ?

Moreover, you would do well to enquire, whether you are careful in your private Stations and Relations to be as good, and to do all the Good you can. If you are Husbands, or Wives, do you endeavour to be as good as you can in that Relation, whereby you may be meet Helps, mutual Comforts and Blessings ? If you are Parents, do you endeavour to do all the Good you can to your Children, by providing for them, by instructing them, and bringing them up in the Fear of God, and in the Ways of Religion, whereby they may be capable of doing Good, and of being Blessings in their Day ? And if you are Masters or Mistresses, do you give unto your Servants that which is just and equal, and are you careful to teach and instruct them, and to be of all the Benefit to them, both to their Souls and to their Bodies, that is justly expected from you ? In a Word, are you concerned to be as useful and beneficial to others as you can, and that every one might be the better by you, that has any Concern with you ? Have you an Eye not meerly at your own Interest, but at the Good of others ? And is there a publick generous Principle

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Principle that runs thro' all your Actions, and that influences you in them? These, my Brethren, would be happy Tokens that you are led by the Spirit of God, who is Goodness itself, and is good to all, and by the Spirit of Christ, who was so good as to leave Heaven it self to come upon this Earth, to redeem and save such sinful Worms as we are. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your Sakes he became poor, that ye through his Poverty might be rich. **

7. *Another Fruit of the Spirit is FAITH.*

By which is generally understood in this Place *Truth, Sincerity, and Fidelity towards Men.* It is our being true and sincere in our Words and Promises, and faithful in every Business we undertake, and in every Station and Relation of Life, and to every Trust reposed in us. By *Faith* here we must understand a Person's being so true to his Word, so faithful, and honest in all his Concerns, as to gain Faith and Credit among others, so as to be himself believed, trusted to, and depended upon.

So that wherever this Spirit of God, this Spirit of Truth, works powerfully and effectually, it will produce this desirable but rare Fruit among Men. He will make Men true to their Words, sincere in their Professions,

* 2 Cor. 8. 9.

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and punctual to their Promises, honest in all their Dealings, and faithful in all their Trusts, discharging every Duty, and performing every Business, faithfully, honestly, and according to Expectation and Agreement.

Now then, if you would know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must enquire for this Fruit of the Spirit, this Faith, this Truth, this Honesty, Uprightness and Fidelity.

Here then let me enquire of you, whether you hate the Way of Lying, and the Way of deceiving others by your Words? Are you careful to speak the Truth one to another, or have you a Tongue that frameth Deceit? Are you careful in relating of Facts, not to exceed the Truth? Do you endeavour to make just and true Representations of Things, so as to lead Persons into a just and right Apprehension of them? Are you more concerned to relate Stories as you receive them, than to embellish them with Additions of your own? Are you more concerned to relate Matters of Fact as they really and truly are, than to set them off with some aggravating Circumstances beyond the Truth?

Again, Are you careful to avoid all Flattery, which is but Deceit and Falshood, and do you endeavour to deal plainly, faithfully, and truly one with another? And on the other Hand, Are you careful not to defame, not to raise nor spread false Reports against any, by which you would

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would not only wrong the Truth, but greatly injure your Neighbour's Credit and Character?

Again, Are you sincere in your Professions of Love and Friendship, or is your Love more in Word and in Tongue, than in Deed and in Truth?

But then again, you would do well to enquire how it is with Respect to Promises. Are you cautious in making Promises; but when you have given your Word and Promise are you careful to fulfil it? Do you make Conscience of being as good as your Word, and do you endeavour that your Word may be as good as your Bond?

Again, let me enquire, whether you are true, faithful and honest in your Work as well as in your Words? Whatever Work you undertake, do you endeavour to do it faithfully according to your Skill and Power, so that there shall be no Deceit in the Work; do you in your several Occupations see to it that every Piece of Workmanship that goes out of your Hands be done as it ought to be, that it is not slighted over, nor its Defects covered, whereby others are deceived and imposed upon?

Furthermore, Do you endeavour to be faithful in every Relation? Are you according to your Marriage-Covenant, loving and faithful Husbands, loving, faithful and obedient Wives? Are you faithful Parents, and do you, according to your Covenant-Promises and Engagements,

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ments, bring up your Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord ? And are you faithful Children, paying that Honour, that Love, that Obedience and Subjection to your Parents that is due to them from you ? Are you faithful Masters to your bought or hired Servants, and to your Apprentices, giving them that Instruction and Knowledge in Religion, and in the particular Arts or Trades they come to be instructed in ? And you that are Servants are you faithful to your Masters, serving them not with Eye-Service, as Men-pleasers, but in Singleness of Heart, fearing God ? Are you careful not to *purloin*, or wrong your Masters in any Thing, but by Diligence and Care about his Interest shew all good Fidelity ?

But to go on, if any of you are advanced to Places of Power and Trust, either in the State or in the Church, are you concerned to be faithful herein ? Are you faithful to your King and Country, faithful to the Church & Town, are you faithful to the College, and to every Society you are concerned with and for ?

In a Word, Can you upon a thoro' and impartial Reflection upon your own Conduct in your Places, find your *Consciences testifying for you, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God you have had your Conversation in the World ?* * If your

* 2 Cor. I. 12.

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Consciences can but give such a Testimony as this for you, it will be Matter of rejoicing to you, because it will be an Evidence of your being under the Influence of a gracious Principle.

8. *Another Fruit of the Spirit, is MEEKNESS.*

Now by *Meekness*, we may understand an humble quiet Spirit, the *meek* Man is he who is in a great Measure delivered from the Power of Pride and Passion. He is the very Reverse of the *proud and haughty Scorn*er, and of him *who deals in proud Wrath*, of whom we read, *Prov. 21. 24.* The *meek* Man is he that has a humble Sense of himself, of his Sins, of his Infirmities, and Imperfections, and of his constant Liability to err, and fall as others do : And he is disposed to think and speak of others, and to behave towards others, with that Humility and Condescension, with that Candour and Moderation, as becomes him under such a Sense of himself. The *meek* spirited Man, is not a Man of a mean little Spirit ; tho' he be poor in Spirit, yet he is not poor spirited. The *meek* Man is not of a cowardly dastardly Spirit. But that Meekness which is the Fruit of the Spirit, supposes an enlarged, a generous, and a truly courageous Soul. A Soul raised up above the little Things which disturb the Pride and Passions of others. The *meek* Man is not blind so as not to see Faults, nor is he stupid so as not to be affected

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affected with them ; nor is he so weak spirited as to be afraid to resent or reprove a Fault. No, if the meek Man sees his Brother offend, he will be ready to tell him of his Fault, and be as faithful in administering a Reproof as any ; but then he wont do it in a haughty and imperious Manner, but with a Spirit of Meekness, Love, and Tenderneſs : Not in a Way that tends to irritate but to convince his offending Brother, not to upbraid and reproach him for his Falls, and to vent his Pride and Paſſion, as is too commonly the Caſe, but in a friendly and yet faithful Manner, ſo as to melt and humble, and bring to Repentance, and thereby gain his Brother.

For this Meekneſs which is ſo great an Ornament of the Chriſtian, don't ſuppoſe that we are without Paſſions, but the right Government of them by Reaſon and Religion, ſo as to reſtrain all that is proud and haughty, all that is raſh, and haſty, either in Heart, Speech or Behaviour. And an excellent Spirit this is. This was the diſtinguiſhing Character of the Man *Moses*, that he was MEEK above all the Men upon the Face of the Earth. * And we are told that an Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit is in the Sight of God of great Price. † And many Things are ſpoken in Favour of the Meek. *Blessed are the Meek, for they ſhall inherit the*

* Numb. 12. 3. † 1 Pet. 3. 4.

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Earth. † The Meek will be guide in Judgment, the Meek will be teach his Way. || The Meek will be beautify with Salvation. §

Now then, if you would know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must see whether you have this blessed Fruit of the Spirit. Are you so led by the Spirit of Christ as that you have *learned of him who was meek and lowly in Heart*? * Have you something of that Meekness and Gentleness that was in him? Have you a just, that is a mean Opinion of yourselves? Do you see that you are ignorant and weak, that you are corrupt and wicked, and that you have given great Provocation to God, and that you deserve the heaviest Judgments at his Hands; and when his Hand is heavy upon you, are you humble, silent, and submissive, acknowledging that God punishes you far less than your Iniquities deserve? And so are you patient in Spirit, rather than proud and fretful in Spirit, under the afflictive Dispensations of divine Providence? Moreover, do you see so much of your own Sinfulness and Weakness, as to esteem others better than your selves? And are you kindly affectioned one to another, in Honour preferring one another, instead of striving to be preferred above others? And instead of haughty Airs, and an imperious Carriage,

† Matth. 5. 5. || Psal. 25. 9. § Psal.
149. 4. * Matth. 11. 29.

do

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do you behave with Meekness, and Kindness, and Condescension to your Inferiours and Equals, as well as with Respect and Honour to your Superiours? If you are ever engaged in Controversies, do you manage with *Meekness of Wisdom*, so as to shew not only that your own Spirit is calm, but so as shall also tend to soften, and calm, and quiet the Spirits of others? And if you receive Injuries, and meet with great Provocations, do you in Patience possess your Souls, looking upon all you meet with to be no more, nor so much as you deserve? And altho' it should be very unjust from Men, can you bear it patiently, considering how very just it is from God? In a Word, are you meek and lowly in Heart, and are you so cloathed with Humility, as that it appears upon all Occasions, even in Days of Temptation, in Days of Provocation? And if Pride and Passion do sometimes break out, instead of justifying yourselves, and saying you *do well to be angry*, and that it is but a just Resentment, are you humble for it, and do you watch and pray against it? And are you upon the gaining Hand in this Respect? If it be thus with you, it is a good Evidence for you. But here I would say, to prevent your being deceived, that they are not the most meek and humble Christians that think themselves so, or that talk a great deal of their Humility; nay the humble Soul is oftentimes the least sensible of it, and sees and complains most

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of his Pride and Passion, not but that even here also there may be a Delusion, for Persons may take a Pride in speaking of their Pride, and in representing themselves to be exceeding proud and wicked.

9. *The last Fruit of the Spirit here mentioned,*
is TEMPERANCE.

Now by *Temperance* we are to understand, the due Regulations and Restraints of our natural sensative Appetites and Desires of any sensative Enjoyment whatsoever. The foregoing Fruits of the Spirit, referred more especially to the Government of our Passions or Affections; this concerns the Government of our Appetites or sensative Desires more especially, and such as are led by the Spirit of God, the whole Man, the Appetites, as well as the Passions, will be governed by him; for when he comes to any Purpose, he sanctifies thro'out, in Spirit, Soul, and Body.

This Temperance intends the being sober in the Use of any of the good Things that God has given us to enjoy; and that we do not indulge our sensative Desires any farther than is consistent with the Rules of Sobriety and Chastity, as they are laid down for us in the Word of God. It intends, that we consider the wise Designs of God in giving those sensative Appetites and Desires to us. The one for the propagating our Kind, and for preserving and promoting

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moting that intimate Love and Union between Husband and Wife, which is so necessary for the Comfort and Happiness of the connubial State. The other Appetites for the Support, Comfort, and Refreshment of our Natures. But as these Appetites since the Fall are all of them grown inordinate, and exceeding apt to carry us beyond due Bounds ; so it is necessary for us to have them under such Restraints as to answer the good Ends proposed by them. And the keeping our Appetites within these Bounds, is what is called *Temperance*. It is a preserving a Chastity in Heart, Speech, and Behaviour : It is a refraining from all Gluttony in Eating, and from all Drinking wherein is Excess. And such Regulations and Restraints, when they arise from true christian Principles, are by the Influence of the divine Spirit. And although some may be regular on these Accounts that have not the Spirit of God ; yet there are none that are under the leading governing Influence of the Spirit, but what will be under these Regulations.

So then, would you know whether you are led by the Spirit of God, you must enquire after this *Temperance*, which is the Fruit of the Spirit. Are you, as the Word of God requires you to be, sober, and chaste, and temperate in all Things ? Do you flee Fornication and uncleanness, and instead of having Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darknes, do you

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rather reprove them? Do you carefully avoid all lascivious and wanton Carriage, and do you lay aside all Filthiness and foolish Talking and Jestings, which is not convenient, and do you endeavour to banish all carnal Imaginations, and not suffer impure Tho'ts to lodge within you? And instead of these Things, do you exhibit to the World a chaste Conversation coupled with Fear, both in the married and unmarried State?

But then again, how do you regulate your other Appetites? Are you watchful against all Excess in Meat and Drink? If you find a strong Appetite inclining you to eat more than is for your Health, do you watch and guard against Excess herein, when you are at Feasts where there is Plenty, Variety, and Dainties, do you consider diligently what is before you, and put a Knife to your Throat? * And how is it with you as to your drinking strong Drink? Do you restrain and govern your Appetites in this Respect, so as not to be intoxicated with it, and so as not to raise your Spirits and your Passions beyond due Bounds? You must remember what the Preacher says, that *Wine is a Mocker, and strong Drink is raging, and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise.* † But Oh how many are deceived hereby! Not only those that are gross Drunkards; but many others, who altho' they don't drink themselves

* Prov. 23. 1, 2, 3. † Prov. 20. 1.

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drunk, yet drink to such Excess as to hurt their Health, to break their Constitution, to weaken their Judgment, to raise their Passions, to make them contentious and quarrelsome at Home and Abroad : And by tarrying long at their Cups, waste their Time, spend their Money, and impoverish their Families. And now in these Ways Men are as truly guilty of a sinful Excess as when they are actually intoxicated with Drink ; and whatever some such Persons may think of themselves, it is a sad Sign that they are not under the governing Influences of the blessed Spirit. Persons therefore should carefully examine themselves in this Matter, and remember that all Eating and Drinking, beyond what is for Nourishment and Refreshment, and that discomposes the Mind, or indisposes the Body, and unfits for the Service that God calls unto ; and that evidently tends to hurt our Healths, is Excess. Moreover, there is a high luxurious Way of living, in which Persons sinfully gratify their Ambition as well as their Appetites. For altho' such as have a Plenty of this World's Goods may lawfully live in a more sumptuous Manner than others ; yet for Persons of plentiful Incomes to live so up to the Extent of their Means, as to disable themselves from those Acts of Piety and Charity, which are just and reasonable from their Incomes, and especially when any live so beyond their Means, as to spend upon the Estates of others, and disable them-

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selves from paying their just Dues, it is a sinful Excess. In this therefore People would do well to examine themselves; for I apprehend that Persons living above their Circumstances is sinful, and contrary to what the Word and Spirit of God teaches, which is to *be content with such Things as we have.* * Furthermore, you must examine whether you keep in due Bounds as to your Diversions and Recreations, so as to spend no more of your precious Time in Pleasure than may serve to unbend your Spirits, to promote your Health, and enable you the more chearfully to go on in your Business, or whether your Love of Ease and Pleasure so grows upon you, as that you fall into an idle, slothful, careless Way of living, to the Neglect of God, and of yourselves and Families?

Now we must examine ourselves in these Matters, and know what Government we have over our Appetites: For unless these be under due Regulations and Restraints, we have no Reason to think we are led by the Spirit of God. The Fornicator, the Adulterer, the Effeminate, and the Abusers of themselves with Mankind, the Glutton, the Drunkard, the Idle, the Voluptuous, and the Extravagant, can't be tho't to be led by the Spirit of God, and so have not this Mark of their being the Children of God. For altho' every sober, temperate, pru-

* Heb. 13. 5.

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dent, diligent Man may not be led by the Spirit of God, but may be induced to such a Carriage from other Motives than those of the Gospel; yet this we may lay down as a Rule, that no Man is led by the Spirit of God, but what is sober, and chaste, and temperate. And consequently altho' every sober Man may not conclude himself a Child of God; yet every one who allows himself in Luxury and sinful Excesses, may conclude that he is not a Child of God. *Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Drunkards, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* *

And thus I have gone thro' the several Signs and Tokens which I proposed to give you, of Persons being so led by the Spirit of God, as to demonstrate that they are the Children of God. And here I have put a great many close Questions to you, and it will take you some Time to answer them. And they are not so easily answered as some may imagine; and a rash sudden answering them will be very dangerous and hurtful to you. Put these Questions distinctly, and closely, and impartially to your own Souls, and seek for such an Answer as is really and truly the Case: And don't go to flatter and deceive your selves with false Answers. I don't doubt but that some of you will

* 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.

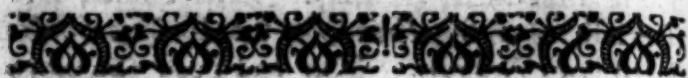
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find it difficult to answer in some Points, and especially as to the *Principle*, the *End*, and *Motive* of your Actions. You had need therefore deal much with your own Hearts, and observe them and the Workings of them upon all Occasions. And Oh that this *divine eternal Spirit* would so lead you as to assist you in the Trial of your selves ! and that such as are not led and governed by him, that he would convince them of it, give you to see the carnal wretched State you are in, and come so powerfully upon you as to convert and save you. And that such as are truly led by him, that he would so shine upon his own Work in your Souls as to give you to see it, and to reap the Comfort of it ; having the blessed Spirit witnessing in that Way with your Spirits that ye are the Children of God.

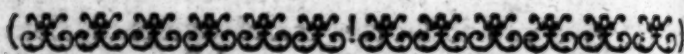
All that remains further for the finishing the Subject is, some Application and Improvement, for altho' most that has been said is practical ; yet there are some useful Inferences, and some practical Remarks, Counsels, and Exhortations, that may not be unseasonable ; but I must leave them 'till God gives another Opportunity.



Discourse



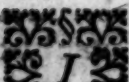
Discourse VI.



The Proposition I have insisted upon is this,
Viz.

Prop. II. *The surest and the best Evidence of our being the Children of GOD, is our being led by the SPIRIT of GOD.*

For the Illustration of which I have said :

1.  *T is an infinite Privilege to be the Children of GOD.*

2. *It is Matter of unspeakable Comfort to be well satisfied in our own Minds, that we are the Children of GOD.*

3. *There are many Marks and Signs of our being the Sons of GOD, which Men are apt to take*

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up with, that are false, at least uncertain, and by
no Means to be depended upon.

4. *The surest and clearest Mark, and which we
may depend upon, is our being led by the SPIRIT
of GOD.*

And as the two last Discourses have been
taken up in shewing, when Persons may be said
to be so led by the Spirit of God, as to be a
sure and clear Mark of their being the Children
of God; I shall now proceed to make some
practical Remarks upon what has been said on
this Point, by Way of

A P P L I C A T I O N.

Inf. I. *What we have heard about being led
by the SPIRIT of GOD, teaches us, that the
Leading of this SPIRIT contains more in it
than most People imagine.*

Men are exceeding apt to have but a partial,
and so imperfect Notion of the Leadings of the
divine Spirit, and of that gracious Principle,
which influences and governs every good Chris-
tian. Men don't consider what a universal
Principle this is; nor what a universal Change
it works in Men's Hearts; nor what a univer-
sal Influence it has upon Men's Lives. If Men
were duly sensible of this, they would not be so
quick

quick in judging themselves to be the regenerated Children of God, as now they are.

By what you have heard, you may presently understand, that wherever the Spirit of God comes powerfully and effectually, he sanctifies thro'out in *Spirit*, in *Soul*, and in *Body*. He enlightens the *Understanding*, he renews the *Will*, he regulates the *Passions*, he corrects the *Appetites*, and the particular *Genius* and *Temper* is sanctified : So that the Man is *made a new Creature*, *old Things are passed away, behold all Things are become new.* * This blessed Spirit wherever he leads, he leads the Soul to God, and to Christ, and to Holiness ; he leads to the Belief of the holy Scriptures as the only sure Rule of Faith and Manners, leads to a devout, prayerful and tho'tful Frame of Soul, and into a child-like Temper and Disposition. Moreover he leads the Soul to bring forth all those social Graces that are the Fruit of the Spirit, such as Love to our Neighbour, Joy in his Prosperity, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance. And in short, every Grace and Vertue that relates either to God, our Neighbour, or our selves, are wrought in the Soul by the blessed Spirit, where he leads and governs. Altho' all those Graces may not be so conspicuous in some ; yet it must be said that there is the Principle, the Root and

* 2 Cor. 5. 17.

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Foundation of every Grace laid in every Soul where the Spirit of God comes with Power.

But now this is not what People are generally aware of, they will indeed say that they believe it to be so ; but then don't consider how exceeding broad the divine Commandment is, nor how extensive that Principle must be, that will cause them to have Respect to all God's Commandments. Persons sometimes find themselves altered as to some particular Points, and they are ready to conclude that there is a thoro' and saving Conversion to God, when there is really no such Thing. Some Convictions and Terrors, and then some sudden Flashes of Joy, and some Restraints or Refrainings from some particular Sins, and the running into the Practice of some particular Duties, have been too often mistaken for the whole of Conversion and Regeneration. And they mistake because they don't know any better ; they have never experienced a thoro' and saving Change, and so don't know by Experience what it is, nor how extensive it is ; and no Wonder if they mistake and frame very contracted Notions of Conversion.

Inf. 2. Are only such the Children of God who are led by his SPIRIT, as has been described, hence we may fear that the Number of such are comparatively small.

When

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When we consider what it is to be led by the Spirit of God, and what a mighty Change is wrought thereby in Men's Hearts, and what a Turn is given to Men's Temper and Behaviour, and when we consider all the Fruits and Effects of the Blessed Spirit, wherever he works powerfully and effectually, and alas where do we find such Men ! Indeed we are not to expect to find any who have attained to such a Degree, as to *be already perfect*, and that have entirely gotten from under the Power of their Lusts, so as to have no Out-breakings of Corruption ! I say we are not to expect to find such : For the blessed Apostle *Paul* had not, nor had any of the Rest of the Apostles, attained to a sinless Perfection. And therefore if we should look for absolutely perfect Men, we should find none, *for there is not a just Man upon Earth, that doth Good, and sinneth not.* * But even as to such as are so under the gracious Influence of the blessed Spirit as that the Principle of Grace prevails above their Lusts, and Corruptions, which is the Case of every true Christian ; I say, the Number of these is but small, compared with those who are under the Power of their Lusts, and so in their carnal unregenerate State. For let us but observe the general Temper which Men discover, and let us observe the general Course of Men's Lives, and we shall have abundant Rea-

* Eccl. 7. 20.

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son to fear that the greater Part are led away of their own Lusts, rather than by the Spirit of God. How many are carried away with Pride, how many with Covetousness, or an inordinate Love of the present World? And how many with Malice and Hatred, Discontent and Envy? Others we shall see to be Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God, given up to Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness, to Luxury, Idleness, and Sloth. And if we take away all such as are apparently & evidently under the prevailing Power of some Lust or other, and add to them a great, tho' uncertain Number of close Hypocrites, who make a good Appearance, but are really under the Power of their Lusts; and there will be found but a small Number of those that are really and truly under the governing Influence of a divine and gracious Principle. There are great Numbers that are apparently and evidently in their Sins; and many more, who if they have a good Outside; yet are rotten at the Heart. And now when all the openly Wicked, and all the refin'd Hypocrites are taken out, we shall find but a small Number comparatively left: Oh how few, that love God with all their Heart and with all their Soul. How few that love their Neighbour as themselves! What little Faith would Christ find upon the Earth, if he should now come? And how rare are the true Fruits of the Spirit, even among professing Christians,

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who

who pretend to be, and many of them think they are governed by his Spirit ! Alas, Do not their Corruptions break out much more frequently than their Graces ; nay don't their Corruptions break forth so frequently and so grossly, as to give Reason to fear that there is no true Grace in them ? If we judge Men by their Fruits, (and if we judge them at all it must be by their Fruits) we shall have a melancholy View of Mankind, and shall see the greatest Part of Mankind under the Dominion of their Lusts, and but few comparatively under the gracious Influence of the Spirit. Christ called his Flock, *a little Flock*. † And we are told that *many are called*, that is with the external Call of the Gospel, *but few are chosen*. || *Wide is the Gate and broad is the Way that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat ; because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.* *

Inf. 3. *Are the Children of God so led by his Spirit, and governed by this gracious Principle as has been described ? Hence then, how amiable and truly excellent are the Children of God !*

† Luk. 12. 32. || Mat. 20. 16.

* Mat. 7. 13, 14.

For

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For wherever the Spirit of God takes Possession, he begets the most amiable and excellent Qualities pleasing to God, lovely in the Eyes of Angels, and of all the Saints, and which indeed beget the Veneration and Esteem of all ; Qualities which render them happy to themselves, and comfortable to all that they have any Concern withal.

When we consider the Temper that is wrought by the Spirit of God in all his Children, and their Carriage and Behaviour consequent hereupon, both towards God and towards Man, we may say with the Preacher, that the *Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour.* * Yea that the *Saints are the only excellent ones in all the Earth.*

When we behold the Children of Men under the Ruins of the Fall, they appear vile deformed Creatures indeed, more vile than the Beasts that perish : And we can hardly conceive how beautiful and excellent a Creature he was, when he first came out of his Creator's Hands, with the Image of God bright upon him.

But now when the Spirit of God restores the divine Image or gracious Principle to the Soul in any Measure ; then the Beauty and Glory of Man begins again to appear. And Oh the unspeakable Difference between the Sinner and the Saint ! One that is evidently under the

† Prov. 12. 26.

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Power of his Lusts, his fleshly Lusts that make him a Brute, and more vile than the Beasts; and his spiritual Lusts that make him like the Devil himself: I say the Difference between such a Man, and a Man renewed and sanctified with the Spirit of God, and under the governing Influence of a divine and gracious Principle!

Indeed this Difference at present is not so conspicuous as is to be desired, because of the Sin and Corruption that still remain in God's Children, and too too often break forth in the very best of them.

But now let us consider the distinguishing Marks of God's Children, and draw the Picture of a Saint, with only these general Characters that I have given as Signs of our being led by the Spirit of God, and are the very Lines which the divine Spirit draws upon every true Christian, and he will appear in a most beautiful and amiable Light, he will appear glorious and excellent.

Thus let us behold the Christian convinced of Sin by the Spirit of God, truly humble and sorry for all his past Sins, and hating every evil and false Way, and reforming those Things that are amiss, and departing even from his own Iniquity.

Let us view him also in his hearty Return to God, from whom he has revolted, and in his close Attachment to him, loving him with all his

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his Heart and Soul, careful above every Thing to please him, and fearful of offending him, aiming at his Honour and Glory in all he does, and placing all his Happiness in the Enjoyment of him ; going to him as his Father, acknowledging him in all his Ways, seeking to him, and trusting in him for all he wants, and giving him the Praise of all that he receives.

Again, Let us view him in his Union to the Lord Jesus Christ by Faith, believing in him with all his Heart, as his only and all-sufficient Saviour, renouncing all Confidence in himself, and in any Righteousness of his own, depending upon being pardoned, assisted, and accepted, only in and thro' this dearly beloved Son of God : And at the same Time his Heart shewing forth the highest Love to the Lord Jesus, loving him above Father, and Mother, and Brethren, and Sisters, and Houses, and Lands ; yea and above his very Life, for the infinite Love he has shewn to him.

Let us also view the Christian in his earnest Desires and Endeavours to be as like to the Lord Jesus Christ as possible ; striving after the same Mind, and Spirit, and endeavouring to tread in the same Steps.

Let us view him in his constant and devout Attendance upon Christ in all his Institutions, strictly observing his Directions, and walking in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord blameless.

Let us view him acquiescing in all the Dispensations of divine Providence, receiving Mercies thankfully, bearing Afflictions patiently, and whatever State and Condition he is in, therewith content.

Again, Let us view him in his sincere and undissembled Love to Mankind, loving his Neighbour as himself, dealing justly with all Men, speaking the Truth to his Neighbour, and doing such Acts of Piety and Kindness as he has Ability and Opportunity for. Let us view him feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, relieving the Distressed, instructing the Ignorant, setting them to rights that are out of the Way, sympathizing with all according to their Circumstances, weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that rejoice, and studying the Things that make for Peace, patiently bearing any Injuries and Abuses, rather than revenge them, and laying aside all Malice, and Guile, and Hypocrisies, and Envyings, and Evil-speakings; being reviled he blesses, being persecuted he suffers it, being defamed he intreats, and is gentle, and good, and kind, and faithful, and honest, and all cloathed and adorned with Meekness, Modesty and Humility.

But then finally, let us view the Christian or Child of God in his Conduct and Management towards himself.

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Let us view him in the Rule of his own Spirit, and in preserving the just Government of his Passions, keeping them within due Bounds and under the Regulation of Reason and Religion. Let us view him in his just Contempt of the World, and of all Things in it ; and yet managing all his worldly Affairs with Diligence, with Care, and with Discretion. Let us view him in his moderate Use of all Things which God has given ; in his being sober, chaste, and temperate in all Things.

And now I have recollected a few Hints from the foregoing Discourses, which may go for a rough Draught of a Child of God, and are some of the general Lines which are drawn by the Spirit of God, upon the Soul and upon the Life of every gracious Saint.

And now, my beloved Brethren, what a Beauty, what a Brightness is there in every one of these Lines ? And how amiable, lovely, and beautiful, must the Man be that has these Characters bright upon him ? --- Indeed the Unhappiness is, that we hardly ever did see such an one, where all these Lines were strong and clear ; for the Case with the best of Christians among us is this, that altho' some of these Lines or Characters may be very conspicuous, yet others are weak and much obscured. The Sins and Corruptions that still remain do so blot and blur and stain them, that some of them in some Christians can hardly be perceived.

But

But now let us by what we have seen in some Christians that have been eminent for some Graces, imagine a Saint with ALL these Characters clear and strong upon him ; that is, let us imagine a Man as not only having all these Virtues and Graces of the Spirit, but as having them in a strong, lively, and vigorous Exercise, and oh how glorious would he appear ! Surely he would attract the Love, Delight and Complacency of God himself ; for he cannot but delight in these moral Virtues and Graces wherever he beholds them. And every Angel in Heaven, as well as every Saint on Earth, must needs be in Love with such an one ; nay, the very Devils, and wicked Men, would be forced to acknowledge him to be truly excellent and glorious.

Well then, altho' we may not expect to see such a perfect Man in Christ Jesus, as this, nor to attain to it our selves, in the present State of Imperfection ; yet let us aspire after it, and desire and endeavour to come as near to it as possible. O let us strive after those divine Vertues, those heavenly Graces which will render us so like to God, and so lovely in his Eyes, and in the Eyes of Angels and Saints, and which will be such an everlasting Spring of Peace, Happiness and Joy to ourselves.

Now therefore suffer the Word of EXHORTATION. And the *Exhortation* which speak

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eth to you at this Time is, That you would earnestly seek and strive to obtain *this blessed Spirit of God, to lead, and guide you, to beget those divine Vertues and Graces in your Souls, and draw them forth in a vigorous Exercise in your Lives.*

I scarce think there is one of you all, so abandoned, but that you would be glad to be numbred among the Children of God, and to be secured of all the glorious Privileges of such: But then in order to this, you must be under the leading governing Influence of the Spirit of God, you must have him working powerfully and effectually upon your Souls, producing this gracious Change, and impressing such gracious Principles, and drawing forth every Grace into Exercise. And therefore this is the first and the grand Thing to be desired and sought after by us; namely to be led by the blessed Spirit of God, to be impressed with this divine and heavenly Principle. The great Thing we need, and which we should be most of all desirous of is, that the Spirit of God might *move upon our Hearts*, with his almighty Energy, as he did upon *the Face of the Waters* at first; removing that Corruption and Confusion that is upon them, rectifying the Disorders that are within, and *restoring our Souls*; that is, restoring the divine Image, and all those gracious Dispositions and Habits which were lost by Sin: Which is the only sure and certain Sign of our being the Children of God.

And

And now that you may be quickned carefully to seek and strive for this blessed Spirit, and for those blessed and gracious Influences thereof ; I will offer a few Things to your Consideration, which if they be accompanied with the blessed Spirit into your Hearts, will excite Desires and stir up Endeavours, in the Way of the Gospel, for the obtaining the same to purpose.

I. Do but consider, it is the BLESSED SPIRIT OF GOD, *that you are advised and exhorted to seek after, and to whose guiding and governing Influences you are recommended.*

It is no less than the *divine eternal Spirit*, and no less than God himself, that you are advised to put your self under. And therefore you may be sure that there can be no Danger in being led by this Spirit. It is impossible for this *Spirit of God*, who is a Spirit of *Grace*, of *Truth*, of *Holiness*, and *Goodness*, to lead us to any Thing but what is true, and good, and holy. This Spirit can lead us to nothing, but what will tend to make us good and happy. So that you may be sure it is a Privilege to be led by this Spirit ; that he leads in none but safe and right Paths ; that he leads in the Truth, and teaches ; that he leads in the Paths of Righteousness, for his Name's Sake. So that if you desire to be led in the right Way, in the Way of Holiness, and in the Way of Peace and Happiness

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pineness forever ; you must desire to be led by this Spirit, and put your selves under the governing Influences thereof.

2. Consider, none but this Spirit can or will lead you in the right and safe Way.

There are many false and lying Spirits gone forth into the World. The Devil, and all his accursed Legions, are lying Spirits, and they lie in wait to deceive. And the good Angels, altho' they are for nothing but the Truth ; yet they, altho' they excell in Strength, yet are not able of themselves to work savingly and effectually upon Men's Souls ; tho' they have a good Will to it ; yet they have no Power to restore our Souls, and create us anew in Christ Jesus. *They are ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be Heirs of Salvation.* * But they cannot work saving Grace in the Soul. This must be done, whenever it is done, by the Spirit of God. And unless we are brought under the powerful gracious Operations of the Spirit, we shall abide in our carnal natural State. So that if ever you would be delivered from the dreadful Ruins of the Fall, if ever you would be delivered from the dreadful Slavery you are in to your Lusts and Corruptions, and brought into the glorious Liberties of the Sons of God ; you must seek and endeavour to be led by this blessed Spirit ; for without this, all Means that can be used will prove ineffectual.

3. Consider

3. Consider, none are *the true Children of God*, but such as are born of this Spirit.

Such as are born of this Spirit are born of God, and so are the Children of God; but as for such as have not had this regenerating and renewing of the holy Ghost, let them call themselves the Children of God, and let others think them so; yet God will never own them for his, nor treat them as his Children. And therefore as ever you desire the glorious Privileges of the Sons of God, as ever you would be able with Confidence to call him Father, and would have the Liberty to go to him as Children to a Father, as ever you would have him pity you, and love you, as a Father doth a Child, and as ever you would be intitled to the Inheritance of God's Children; you must come under the regenerating and sanctifying Operations of this blessed Spirit.

4. Consider, that the gracious Operation of God's Spirit upon the Soul, is the Seal of the living God, and is also the Earnest of our Inheritance.

We read several Times, of being sealed with the Spirit; and of God's sealing with his Spirit, 2 Cor. I. 22. *Who hath also SEALED us, and given the EARNEST of the Spirit in our Hearts*. And we are warned against grieving the holy Spirit by which we are SEALED unto the Day of Redemption, Eph. 4. 30. So that it is the holy Spirit that seals Men, and seals them unto the

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Day of Redemption, and this blessed Spirit that seals them, does it by making gracious Impressions upon them, by instamping the divine Image upon their Souls, which is God's Seal, his Mark by which he knows all his Children. And wherever this Seal is, there is the Pledge or *Earnest* of the future Inheritance: There is Part given in Token of what is to come; for the gracious Impressions made upon the Soul by the blessed Spirit are the Beginnings of Heaven. That new Life which is breathed into the Soul by the Spirit of God, it is the Beginning of eternal Life. Now then if you would be sealed with God's Seal; if you would be found at last *with the Mark of the living God upon you*, so as to be owned and received among his Children; and if you would have the Pledge and Earnest of eternal Glory within you; yea if you would have the Beginnings of eternal Life in your Souls; you must seek till you obtain this blessed Spirit.

5. *Consider, it is only by being under the blessed Influences of this Spirit, that we can have the Favour of God, the Light of his Countenance, and any true Peace and Comfort in the World.*

God can take no Delight in any, but such as have his Spirit. It is the Comeliness which God himself puts upon us by his Spirit, that renders us the Objects of divine Delight & Complacence. And none but such as have this Spirit

can expect to enjoy God, or any Communion with him, or any Token of his Favour, nor indeed any true Peace and Comfort in the World. This *Sanctifier* is also the *Comforter*. And we must have him as a *Sanctifier*, or we shall never have him as a *Comforter*. Indeed some may be filled with carnal Mirth, and spend many Days in Pleasure, but what Kind of Mirth is it? Why even in *Laughter the Heart is sorrowful*, having a misgiving, accusing Conscience within, and the *End of that Mirth is Heaviness*. * Others also without the Spirit, may pretend to much spiritual Comfort; but alas! it is only *the Light of their own Fire, and Sparks of their own kindling*. † But now where the Spirit of God comes and begets Comfort in the Soul, it is a true and solid Comfort, it is a Peace upon a good Foundation, that will bear to be examined and tried, and the End of it will be Joy.

Well then, would you enjoy God's *Favour which is Life*, and his *Loving-Kindness which is better than Life*? Would you have *the Peace of God that passes all Understanding to keep your Heart and Mind thro' Jesus Christ*, which may support you under all the Troubles of Life, and may dispel all the Terrors of Death? Why then you must seek to obtain this blessed Spirit in the renewing and sanctifying Influences

* Prov. 14. 13. † Isai. 50. 11.

on the foregoing Subject. 193

thereof. You must seek to obtain the Graces, before you can have the Comforts and Joys of the Holy Ghost.

6. Consider, that it is by this blessed Spirit alone that we can be fitted for Heaven, and for the glorious Inheritance which God has there laid up for his Children.

There is no getting to Heaven; nor would it signify any Thing to get thither, unless we are in some Measure fitted for that blessed Place; and all whom God ever receives to Heaven, he fits them for it. The Apostle speaking of Mortality being swallowed up in Life, that is in eternal Life and Happiness, says, that *he who had wrought them for the self-same Thing is God, who had given unto them the Earnest of the Spirit.* * He who hath wrought us for the self-same Thing, or prepared, or fitted, for that blessed Immortality, as it might as well be rendred. So that God prepares and fits every one for Heaven that he receives to it. Giving Thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. † And now the Father does this by his Holy Spirit, in sanctifying, purging and cleansing from those Things that would render us unfit for such a holy Place, and that would hinder us from the Enjoyment of it. - In our

* 2 Cor. 5. 5. † Col. 1. 12.

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natural State we are utterly unfit for Heaven. O ! ye carnal, corrupt, impure Souls, what would you do in Heaven if you could be received thither, which is indeed impossible ! For nothing entreth there that defileth. But if you could get thither, what would you do there ? You could neither bear a Part in the Exercises, nor could you taste the Delights and Pleasures of that glorious Place.

And therefore, as ever you would have an Entrance ministred to you into the everlasting Kingdom, and as ever you would be fit for the Presence of the holy God, as ever you would be fit for the Society of Angels, and of the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and as ever you would be fit for the Exercises, and capable of relishing the Delights and Joys of the heavenly World ; you must seek to obtain this blessed Spirit to sanctify and cleanse you : For as to every one that shall be saved, it may be said, that they are chosen unto Salvation *thro' Sanctification of the Spirit*, and Belief of the Truth. *

And thus you see something of the Importance and Necessity of our being under the leading governing Influences of this blessed Spirit. Of as much Importance as it is for us to be delivered from being the Children of Wrath, and Heirs of Hell, and to be the Children of

* 2 Thef. 2. 13.

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God, Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ, to the heavenly and eternal Inheritance, and to be made meet for it; of so much Importance is it for us to have this divine and blessed Spirit to lead and guide us, and to work all divine Vertues and Graces in our Souls.

And now perhaps some of you are ready to put this Question to me, *viz.* How shall we obtain these blessed Influences of this divine Spirit? What Course must we take that we may be led by the Spirit of God, and have those divine Vertues and Graces wrought in our Souls?

And now to this important Question, I will answer in a few Particulars, by Way of Direction, and so conclude.

DIRECTION I. You must believe and be sensible of the Need you stand in of this blessed Spirit, to lead and govern you, and to work every Grace in you.

Some Men have been so ignorant of their own Weakness and Corruption, as to imagine that with the common Helps afforded them in the outward Means of Grace; they had Power enough of their own to effect a gracious Change: That they could in the Use of these Means convert and change themselves, and put

every Grace into Exercise as there should be Occasion.

But now as such are grossly mistaken, so God oftentimes leaves such self-sufficient, such self-confident Persons to themselves, whereby they may be effectually convinced at length, (and oftentimes when it is too late) that they had not Power of their own to stand; much less to do this and other Duties. And therefore such as are so confident in their own Strength, are not likely to seek for Help as they should, and so not in a likely Way to have the Help of the Spirit afforded unto them.

Our Saviour told his Disciples *that without him they could do nothing.* * We must be sensible that without the Help of his Spirit we can do nothing effectually in the Affair of our Souls. And the more sensible you are of your Weakness, your Corruption, and Wickedness, and the absolute Need you stand in of the special Help of the divine Spirit; the nearer you are to have the Help of this blessed Spirit afforded unto you. Let Persons be but sensible that in their natural State they are weak and impotent, *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; and then they are more ready to look to God for Help, more ready to receive it, and God more ready to bestow it. *The whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* †

* John 15. 5. † Matth. 9. 12, 13.

DIREC. II. *On the other Hand, you must beware of looking upon your Impotency in such a View, and presuming so much upon the Help of the Spirit ; as to sit down in Sloth and Negligence.*

As some Men are vain in their Imaginations with Respect to the natural Powers of Men, and can't bear to think they are so debased and debilitated by the Fall, as really they are ; but think they can do this, and the other by their own Power, without any special Help of the Spirit ; so others are apt to run into the other Extreme, and from the Representation that is made in Scripture of humane Weakness and Corruption since the Fall ; but more especially from some false Glosses that some have put upon certain metaphorical Expressions in Scripture ; and from the strong, indiscreet, and indistinct Expressions of some Teachers, concerning the Impotency of Men ; I say, that from these Things, some have been ready to think that nothing at all can be done by them, nor so much as to be attempted by them ; but will sit still, waiting till the Spirit of God moves them ; pleading that it is in vain to attempt to do any Thing before the Spirit helps them ; yea, and that it would be a sinful presuming in their own Strength, to attempt any Thing before they find the Spirit helping them. And how common a Plea is this with some Persons, when they are called upon to this and the other Duty,

to

to say, I can do nothing of my self, I have no Power of my own, I am not sufficient as of my self for a good Tho't; and how quietly and contentedly will some such Persons sit down in Sloth, and in the Neglect of Duty, with such a Plea as this, from Year to Year, pretending that they wait only for the Spirit of God to help them: When in Fact the Spirit of God has all the While been ready to help them, if they would but improve the Help that he stood ready to afford them. And however some People may quiet themselves in their Sloth and Negligence, from a Pretence of their Impotency, and how much soever they may flatter themselves that they give Glory to God, by pleading such a Weakness and Insufficiency in themselves; yet it will be very offensive to God, and a Means of provoking him to withhold his Spirit from them, when they make use of this as an Argument to encourage themselves in Sloth and Negligence.

For altho' I am fully perswaded that there is a moral Impotency in Men to that which is spiritually good, and that we indeed are not sufficient of ourselves for a good Tho't; yet there is a natural Power still left in Man to do many Things that are materially and externally good; such as to read, to hear, to attend the Worship of God, &c.

Now therefore for any to neglect these external Duties, under a Pretence that they can do

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do nothing of themselves, would be as much an Abuse of the Doctrine of humane Impotency, as it would be for a Man, because we are taught that *in God we live, and move, and have our Being*, * to ly a Bed, and not stir Hand or Foot, pleading that he moves in God, and that he can't move without him.

So that every one who makes use of Man's Impotency as a Plea for Idleness, Sloth and Negligence, it is most certainly an Abuse of the Doctrine: But it rather affords an Argument for striving. I don't mean in our own Strength, but in the Strength of the Lord; and we must try and see whether God don't afford Help and Strength to us. For God is oftentimes striving with Sinners under the Gospel by his Spirit: And who can say, if they should attempt in any Duty, but that God will set in with his holy Spirit and help them? What one Soul can say but that the Spirit of God stands ready to help him, if he will but engage in any Duty. Therefore Men must see what they can do, and go so far as they find they have any Power, instead of sitting down in Sloth and Laziness. The Man with the withered Hand, when Christ bid him *stretch it forth*, did not pretend to plead that he had not Power to stretch it out, but believing that he who bid him stretch it out; was able to strengthen him to it, he attempted to stretch it

* Acts 17. 28.

out,

out, and found Power at the very Time to do it. † Let me tell you, my Brethren, Men must strive and exert themselves with as much Vigour and Earnestness as if they were to do the Whole themselves; but they must at the same Time look to God as performing all Things for them. *We must be working out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, at the same Time we must look to God to work in us both to will and to do of his own good Pleasure. ‡ You must run the christian Race, all the while looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your Faith. § Let us but set out and do what we can, by the common Help of God's Spirit, and we have abundant Reason to hope that God will at length afford the special Influences of his Spirit. *For to him that hath*, that is, that improves what he hath, *shall be given*; whereas, *from him that hath not*, that is, that dont improve what he hath, that acts as if he had not, *shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have.* ||

DIREC. III. *You must be sensible that God acts in a sovereign Manner in giving his holy Spirit. That he gives it to whom, and in what Measure he pleases.*

† Matth. 12. 13. ‡ Phil. 2. 12. § Heb. 12. 1, 2. || Matth. 25. 29.

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We must consider the Gift of the holy Ghost to be as free a Gift as that of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to look upon God as under Obligations to give his Spirit to us, but that it is according to his meer good Pleasure : For *he will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and will have Compassion on whom he will have Compassion.* * Altho' in the Counsels of God in the Covenant of Redemption, we may suppose that it was agreed upon that the eternal Spirit should apply the Redemption purchased by Christ ; yet this Spirit is given to apply this Redemption, by working Faith in the Soul, and uniting it to Christ in effectual Calling, according to the sovereign Pleasure of God. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling ; not according to our Works ; but according to his OWN PURPOSE AND GRACE.* * So that you must not pretend to claim the Holy Spirit ; you must not think that by any Thing you can do, you can challenge the holy Spirit as what you have a Right unto ; the divine eternal Spirit is perfectly free in his Operations, as free as the Wind : *The Wind bloweth where it listeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* † So whenever any of you receive the gracious Influences of this Spirit, you must acknowledge it as a free Gift, and according to the sovereign Pleasure of

* Rom. 9. 15. † 2 Tim. 1. 9.

† John 3. 8.

God, and not for any Thing that you have done. *Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done ; but according to his Mercy he saved us, by the Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour. ** And such as think they may claim the holy Spirit, by any Thing they can do meerly of themselves, are not in a Way to obtain this blessed Spirit. God will have us to know that we have no Claim, no Demand of that Kind upon him ; and that all the blessed Influences of his Spirit, are of rich and free Grace. And in this Way God prepares for his Spirit. When the Soul is brought plainly to see that Man is *saved by Grace, thro' Faith, and this not of himself, but it is the Gift of God. †* He is in a likely Way to obtain this Grace, yea it is a Sign that the Spirit of Grace has begun to work upon that Soul.

DIREC. IV. *You must be much in Prayer to God, for his blessed Spirit to lead and govern you.*

Altho' the Spirit of God in the gracious Influences thereof be the free Gift of God, and he gives it according to his own sovereign Pleasure ; yet he allows and encourages us to ask it of him. And altho' we cannot challenge or demand the holy Spirit, because we have asked it of God ; yet we have great Encouragement

* Tit. 3. 5, 6. † Eph. 2. 8.

to pray, and to hope for obtaining upon our Prayers, provided we have sincere Desires in our Prayers. Indeed if we have any sincere Desires they are stirred up by this very Spirit. Accordingly so far as you are enabled you must desire this blessed Spirit to be your Guide, Sanctifier, and Comforter, and must manifest those Desires in Prayer to God: And if you dont desire so much as you ought, you must pray that you may desire it more. Prayer is a Duty that we can perform in some Sort; and if we can't of ourselves pray so well as we should; let us pray as well as we can, and pray that God would enable us to pray better, and that is the likeliest Way for us to pray better, and one of the best Methods we can take to obtain the holy Spirit in his gracious Influences. For as our blessed Saviour represents the Matter unto us, we may as certainly, yea much more certainly depend upon our heavenly Father to give the holy Spirit to them that ask, than upon our obtaining of our earthly Parents, any good Thing that we ask of them. *If ye being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him.* * So then we must ask this Spirit of God, and we can't expect this Gift without asking.

* Luke 11. 13.

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Indeed

Indeed some have suggested, as if it was a dangerous Thing to set unconverted People, to praying for the holy Spirit: And others have spoken of it as a Matter of great Doubt with them, whether unconverted Persons ought to pray; by Reason of which some weak Minds that have been under Doubts as to their Regeneration, have been under Discouragements as to the great Duty of Prayer. But he that observes the Current of Scripture, will find that every Man is obliged to pray, and especially to ask for the holy Spirit, and for renewing Grace. As it is God's Prerogative to give a new Heart, and a new Spirit, and as he has promised to give it unto his People, so he expects that we should ask it of him. *A new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, ---- and I will put my Spirit within you, &c.* Thus saith the Lord God, *I will yet for this be enquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them.* † Surely then they were to ask and pray for these spiritual Blessings before they should obtain them. And this plainly supposes, that Persons must pray, must seek to God in order to obtain this great Blessing of the Spirit. Moreover, if we may pray that *God would create a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within us;* we may pray before there is such a clean Heart and right Spirit created or renewed within us.

† Ezek. 36. 26, 27, 37.

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But then if we pray for the Spirit of God, we must labour to be earnest and importunate in our Prayers. If we find ourselves cold, dull and lifeless in praying for the Spirit of Grace ; we must pray that God would make us more earnest in our Prayers. We must also set ourselves to consider the infinite Importance, and the absolute Necessity of our obtaining the blessed Spirit, and so must pray that whatever God denies us, he would not deny us his holy Spirit. You should endeavour that the Language of your Souls might be to this Purpose, *Lord, as to outward and temporal Blessings, I ask them with Submission to thy wise and holy Will, whether to grant or to deny: But as to thy holy Spirit, I intreat thee by no Means to deny it unto me, for without thy Spirit I shall remain in a carnal corrupt Estate, and can never see thy Face, nor enjoy thy Favour, but I must be excluded thy Presence for ever.* And so far as there is any Earnestness and Importunity in your Prayers, so far it is a Token for Good. For when God is about to give his holy Spirit in the gracious Influences thereof ; he will stir up some Earnestness of Desire, and will quicken us to call upon his Name.

DIREC. V. *You must readily acknowledge the Help and Influence of the Spirit, which you receive your selves, and perceive in others ; and give GOD the Glory of it.*

As we are to ask for the Spirit, so he is to be acknowledged in all his gracious Influences and Operations upon Men's Hearts, and if we experience any Thing hereof in our selves, in any lively Actings of Faith, and Love, or other Graces, or in any gracious Restraints from Sin, or Assistances to Duty, or in any true spiritual Joy: We must not ascribe those Things to our selves, but acknowledge them all to the Glory of God. We must acknowledge with the Apostle, and say, *By the Grace of God, I am what I am.* ---- *Not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.* || *He which hath wrought us for the self same Thing, is God, who hath also given unto us the Earnest of the Spirit.* * *I live; nevertheless not I; but Christ liveth in me.* † So when we see others evidently under the Influences of this blessed Spirit, we ought, with them, to acknowledge it to the Praise of God. The Apostle observed and declares concerning the converted *Corinthians*, that they were washed, that they were justified, that they were sanctified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and with the Spirit of our God. ‡ And whenever we perceive the Grace of God in any, we should magnify the Lord with them, and exalt his Name together.

And by a thankful acknowledging of the Grace of God we receive our selves, and per-

|| 1 Cor. 15. 12. * 2 Cor. 5. 5. † Gal. 2. 20. ‡ 1 Cor. 6. 11.

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ceive in others, we are in the Way not only to secure what we have, of the divine and gracious Influences ; but also to obtain farther Degrees of divine Grace. *For to him that hath, that thankfully acknowledges what he has, and carefully improves what he has, shall be given, and he shall have more Abundance. ||*

But here we must beware of Errors on the right Hand and on the left. As we must be careful to give God the Glory of all his Grace, and must take heed that we don't ascribe any Thing to our selves which is really the Work of the divine Spirit ; so we must avoid the other Extreme, which is the ascribing this and that to the divine Impulse, and the gracious Influences of God's Spirit, which are really the Effect only of an enlivened Fancy, and warm Imagination ; for this in the Conclusion may be as dangerous and fatal as the other. But Wisdom is profitable, is necessary to direct us in those Things, and the holy Scriptures must be our Guide.

And by this Rule we must judge the Spirits, as well as our selves ; and judge of them by their Fruits, for by their Fruits it is that we can know and judge of them.

And here we may, from the Nature of the divine Spirit, as revealed in his Word, lay down this general Rule in the Matter, *viz.* That those Things are to be attributed to the Spirit of God,

|| Matth. 13. 12.

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that

that plainly, clearly, and fully lead us to God, and Christ, and Holiness, to Justice, Truth, and Charity, to Sobriety, Chastity, and Humility. And that whatever Influence there is upon us, that don't plainly and fully lead us to these Things, whatever specious Appearance it may make at present, it is from some other Spirit than the Spirit of God, and may not be ascribed to him.

DIREC. VI. *You must diligently attend upon all the instituted Means of Grace, wherein you may hope to meet with the Spirit of God in the gracious Influences thereof.*

It is in Concurrence with some outward Means of Grace that God for the most Part works upon the Souls of Men, and makes use of them as the Instruments of our saving Conversion to him. Thus the Word of God is very much made use of in the Hand of the Spirit, for the convincing and converting Sinners. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul.* * That is, instrumentally by the Hand of the Spirit. For it is with the Word that he converts and regenerates the Soul. *Of his own Will begat he us, with the Word of Truth.* † Surely then we ought to converse very much with the Word of God. We should read it, and hear it, with diligent Attention and close

* Psal. 19. 7. † James 1. 18.

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Application, and should meditate therein both Day and Night.

And as the *Goings of our God and King, are to be seen in his Sanctuary, and there he commands the Blessing, even Life for evermore*; so we should be careful to go into his Tabernacle, and worship at his Footstool. We must attend the publick Worship, and upon all the Ordinances of God's House, and in all those Ways that he has appointed for us to meet with him. I say, all the Ways that he has appointed, for it is in the Ways of divine Appointment and Institution that we may hope to meet with him, and with his Grace. And we must be steady and constant in attending upon religious Duties and Ordinances, and must not suffer our selves to be easily diverted from them. We may not forsake the publick Worship, and stated Ordinances, or separate from christian Assemblies where we have been wont to attend, without being able to give a good Reason therefor.

But then we must not content our selves with a bare external Attendance, (which I fear is the Case of many) and the Reason why they have not met with the gracious Influences of the Spirit in Ordinances. But we must give a close and diligent Attention, with Desires, Prayers, and Endeavours, that the End and Design of every Ordinance may be answered upon us.

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In a Word, Let us remember and realize it, that the Spirit of God is always ready to accompany all the instituted Means of Grace ; and if we attend on them in a right Manner, they will be as so many Channels or Conduit Pipes to convey the blessed Spirit, with all its Graces and Comforts into the Soul. With *Joy may we draw Water out of these Wells of Salvation.* * Surely then none of these Ordinances may be neglected, nor may they be attended in a careless customary Manner least you miss of the Holy Spirit after all.

DIREC. VII. *You must take Heed of quenching the Spirit, and must carefully comply with the Strivings thereof.*

This is the cautionary Advice of the Apostle, **QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT.** † And a very necessary Caution it is : For by suppressing the first Motions of the Spirit, and by quenching the Sparks that began to kindle in the Soul, many a one has utterly lost the Spirit of God. He has been so provoked hereat, as to withdraw, and has ceased to strive with them any more. And if God in righteous Judgment sometimes deals thus with those that quench the Spirit, that don't carefully observe the Dictates thereof, nor comply with its blessed Motions ; how much more will he be provoked to leave

* Isaiah 12. 3. † 1 Thes. 5. 19.

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such as do even *resist the Holy Ghost, and do despite unto the Spirit of Grace?* Oh then as ever you would obtain the blessed Spirit, you must take Heed of grieving or provoking him, by resisting him, or refusing to comply with him. You don't know what Hazzard you run every Time you quench or resist the Spirit of God. And let me tell you, that if any of you finally miss of the Spirit of God, and die in your Sins, God will know it, and charge upon every one of you that you quenched his Spirit, that you grieved his Spirit, that you resisted his Spirit, which will stop every Mouth, so that you won't have a Word to say for your selves in the Day of Judgment; but will condemn your selves for refusing and resisting the Spirit of God when he was offered to you. Well then as ever you would obtain the Spirit of God, so as to be a sure Token of your being the Children of God, you must not resist, but readily yield to the Strivings of the Spirit. You must hearken to his Suggestions, and fall in with his blessed Motions. Whatever the Spirit of God suggests from the Word of God, as your Duty, and is prompting you unto, you must comply therewith, without conferring with Flesh and Blood, without consulting your carnal Ease or worldly Interest in the Matter. And by thus hearkening to the blessed Spirit, and complying with the Motions thereof, you will have the Spirit come more and more powerfully upon your Souls

Souls, that at length you will be so led and governed by this Spirit of God, as will be an Evidence that you are the Sons of God.

And now to conclude the whole Subject.

Let us all admire and adore the Riches of divine Grace, that God is pleased to take any of the rebellious Race of *Adam*, and admit them to all the glorious Privileges of his Children; that he has been pleased to send his only begotten and dearly beloved Son to purchase such infinite Benefits for us; and that he has been pleased also to send his holy Spirit, to make us the fit Objects of divine Love and Complacency, and to make us the fit Subjects of sublime Felicity, and of immortal Happiness. And now since this infinitely blessed Spirit, in all his enlightning, convincing, renewing, sanctifying, saving, and comforting Influences is revealed and offered in the Gospel, and since the outward Means of Grace are so freely enjoy'd, and the common Strivings of this Spirit, so frequently experienced by us; Oh! let us take Care that we may not be of that unhappy Number *who receive this Grace of God in vain. Look, look diligently, lest any of you should finally fail of the Grace of God.*

And here you may receive this as a Truth, and rely upon it, that altho' God be the sovereign Dispenser of his Grace; yet that if you

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fail of the Grace of God, fail of obtaining his Spirit to lead and guide you, as he does the Children of God, it will be your own Fault ; and because you have not done what you might have done, and ought to have done, for the obtaining this blessed Spirit.

For if you are found without the Spirit of God and destitute of saving Grace at last, it will be because of your Pride and Self-Conceit, that you presumed in your own Strength, and did not suitably acknowledge the Need you stood in of the Help of the Spirit, or you presumed so much upon the Help of the Spirit, as to lay aside all Endeavours of your own, or you have been so careless about the Matter, as to restrain Prayer before God, and did not seek to him for his Spirit, as you might have done. Or you have denied to the Spirit the Glory of his divine and gracious Influences, attributing those Things which have really been wrought by the Spirit, to some other Causes. Or you have ascribed that to the holy Spirit, which would have been derogatory to his Glory, rather than for his Honour. Or you have neglected some of the Ordinances and Means of Grace which Christ has appointed. Or you have quenched the Spirit, and grieved him, and provoked his Departure. And now if these, and such like, be the real Reasons why any of you go without the Spirit of God, surely you will have a Consciousness of your own Guilt, and

and will judge and condemn your selves, and be obliged to acknowledge the Justice of God in condemning you : And all the World will acknowledge the Justice of the divine Procedure, and say, as in Rev. 16. 5. *Righteous art thou, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus.*

Well then, you must alter your Tho'ts, and alter your Course as to those Things, as ever you would have this Spirit of God to guide and govern you, and even in this you need the Help of the Spirit. Oh ! then let us be sensible that we need the Spirit of God in every Thing, and that without him we can do nothing. Let us cry to God for his Spirit, and that whatever he denies, he would not deny us his Spirit, and that whatever he takes from us, he would not take away his holy Spirit from us. Plead with God as the Psalmist did, *Cast me not away from thy Presence, take not thy Spirit from me.* † Oh let us beware of resisting, grieving, or quenching this blessed Spirit ; for we don't know how soon he may be provoked to depart : And wo unto us, if he depart from us. Let us then be thankful for every Striving of the Spirit, let us cherish every Motion, and comply with every Thing that this divine Spirit prompts us unto ; endeavouring always to distinguish between the Spirit of God and our own Spirits, between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error. Let us

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† Psal. 51. 11.

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wait upon God in all the Ways we have Ground to hope that we shall meet with his Spirit and Grace. And don't let us neglect one Ordinance wherein God is ever wont to communicate his Grace. Let us never flatter our selves that we have the Spirit of God dwelling in us, when he does not, nor let us vainly imagine we have more of the Spirit than we have. But whatever we do really find of the Spirit of God in us, let us acknowledge it as the Fruit of free Mercy, and sovereign Grace in God, and give him the Glory of it. In these Ways we may hope to have the Spirit of God come into us, and to carry on his Grace in our Souls, from one Degree thereof unto another, until all the Vertues and Graces of the Spirit, shall be compleated in us, and we appear in all the Beauty and Glory, and partake of all the Happiness and Joy of perfect Men in Christ Jesus.

Now unto him whose Prerogative it is to *sanctify you, and can sanctify you wholly, and make you meet to partake of all the Privileges of his Children, even of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, and unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, now and ever,*

A M E N.



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Daniel Henchman,
in Cornhill.

GRACE defended, in a modest Plea for an important Truth; namely, That the Offer of Salvation made to Sinners in the Gospel, comprises in it an Offer of the Grace given in Regeneration. And, Shewing the Consistency of this Truth with the free and sovereign Grace of GOD, in the whole Work of Man's Salvation. In which the Doctrine of Original Sin and humane Impotence, the Object and Extent of Redemption, the Nature of Regeneration, the Difference between common and special Grace, the Nature of justifying Faith, and other important Points, are considered and cleared.

6 AP 64
By Experience Mayhew.



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